

**CWA Local 4250 RMC
Steve Tisza, President**



 **FRIDAY ALERT**

Alliance for Retired Americans

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Panel Rejects Calls for Social Security Cuts

The President's Fiscal Commission suffered a defeat Friday morning, as 11 of 18 panel members voted to support their far-reaching deficit-cutting plan. However, 14 of the 18 members of the Commission needed to vote for it to make it an official recommendation, and Commission Co-chairs **Erskine Bowles** and **Alan Simpson** acknowledged that Congress will not consider their work at least until next year. "Retirees temporarily dodged a bullet today when Commission members rejected their Co-chairs' proposal to balance the budget on the backs of retirees," said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. According to *The Washington Post*, the panel's final blueprint for rebalancing the federal budget closely resembles the plan the Co-chairs released earlier. Like the original, it offers a prescription for reducing deficits by nearly \$4 trillion by the end of the decade, in large part by slashing domestic spending, including Social Security. Future retirees would face significant sacrifices, including higher Medicare premiums and a retirement age of 69 in 2075. The proposal would also cut the annual Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment, and cut benefits overall for middle-income earners by 17% to 36%. The early retirement age would rise to 64 from 62. The final package would balance the budget more quickly than the original, wiping out annual deficits by 2035. To see how each panel member voted or for more information about Fiscal Commission actions, go to <http://bit.ly/eNp7FN>. (If you don't have Adobe Acrobat Reader, download it for free at: <http://bit.ly/crHKif>)

Only one member of the panel, Rep. **Jan Schakowsky** (D-IL), said immediately, when the proposal was released on Wednesday, that she would vote against the package. Sen. **Richard Durbin** (D-IL) voted "Yes," despite Illinois Alliance members sending nearly 180 letters to him in a day recommending that he vote against the proposal. "The Co-chairs' recommendations turn a blind eye toward tax cuts for millionaires, and instead choose to callously make workers and retirees pay the price for our nation's badly-flawed tax and spending policies," said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "Since Commission members of all ideologies have acknowledged that Social Security does not add to the deficit, why are these callous, draconian cuts the centerpiece of the Co-chairs' recommendations?" he asked. To see Coyle's full statements from Wednesday and today, go to <http://bit.ly/hx2ujO>. Also, visit the Institute for Women's Policy Research Social Security Media Watch Project at <http://ssmediawatchproject-iwpr.org> to see how much earners in various income categories would lose.

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Alliance Responds to the Commission's Report – and Offensive Comments

On Tuesday, Alliance members were part of a broad coalition that overloaded the Capitol Hill Switchboard with a message of "Hands off Our Social Security!" - causing the phone lines to shut down. Tens of thousands delivered the message.

Earlier in the week, Coyle reacted to Simpson's comments that what Simpson termed, "the greediest generation" of seniors opposes his calls to reduce Social Security benefits and raise the retirement age. Coyle said that Simpson's comments were the latest in a long line of anti-senior slurs that sharply call into question his ability to objectively carry out the Commission's agenda. To see that statement, go to <http://bit.ly/gaGmMo>.

Further Fiscal Commission Action by the Alliance

For the past several weeks, state Alliance chapters have been preparing for the Fiscal Commission report. The California Alliance (CARA) held press events in L.A. and San Francisco last Tuesday, presenting over 75,000 signatures to Rep. **Xavier Becerra** (D-CA), who is on the Commission, and House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA), urging them to share the "NO CUTS" message with the Fiscal Commission and with Congress.

The Illinois Alliance held a press conference with the Champaign County Health Care Consumers the same day to tout their support for Rep. Schakowsky's alternative plan to reduce the deficit. This past Monday, the Arizona Alliance continued its activities with a press conference and an open letter to Sen. **John McCain** (R-AZ). In Pennsylvania, Alliance members lobbied Members of Congress in the southeastern part of the state, urging them to sign on to the Alliance's Social Security petition, and worked together with the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR). Additionally, after working with the Alliance, the Pittsburgh City Council passed a resolution to protect Social Security and reflect the Alliance's positions.

Florida Alliance for Retired Americans (FLARA) members have criss-crossed the state in their efforts to separate fact from fiction. In New Hampshire, a tour of forums has begun. In New Mexico, opinion pieces regarding the commission were published on the Democracy for New Mexico blog. In Connecticut, there was a press event at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. In Iowa, a large meeting of various community and progressive groups was held on Nov 17th, and a follow up event is being planned. Other states have also been active during this important period. Go to the Alliance blog at <http://ara.typepad.com/blog> to see more actions taken, letters sent, and future events planned, as well as photos, for states including Missouri, Pennsylvania and Arizona.

"Doc Fix": Congress Delays Medicare Payment Cuts for Doctors

Congress acted this past Monday to postpone a scheduled 23% Medicare payment cut for doctors. This cut was scheduled to go into effect on December 1st; however this recent congressional action postponed the cuts until January 1st to ensure that those receiving Medicare coverage would not be adversely affected. Senate Finance Committee Chairman **Max Baucus** (D-MT) and the ranking Republican **Charles Grassley** (R-IA) say they are

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working towards a one-year postponement to the cuts and ultimately a new formula to compensate doctors. "The delay lets us avoid immediate disaster, but a permanent fix is needed," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

\$250 Social Security Payment Being Held Hostage by Senate Republicans
Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader **Harry Reid** (D-NV) last month said that they would work to introduce a bill granting a one-time \$250 supplemental payment to Social Security recipients, who will receive no cost of living increase in 2011 for the second year in a row. The vote is being held hostage in the Senate because all Republican Senators wrote to Reid saying they will filibuster all bills until the Bush tax cuts are extended.

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