

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Alliance Members on Guard as State of the Union Address Approaches

On Tuesday, January 25th, the President's annual State of the Union Address will air nationally. When delivering his speech, President **Obama** may address critical retiree issues such as Social Security and Medicare. In the past, the President has supported the Alliance position on Social Security: no benefit cuts, no raising of the retirement age, no cuts in the COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) and no privatization. Because this speech is so important, Alliance members will be hosting 38 State of the Union watch parties in 17 states. Go to <http://bit.ly/eGhWjH> for complete State of the Union information, and to find a party near you! If you are interested in hosting a watch party of your own, it is not too late. Please click on <http://bit.ly/ezVRam> for a handy toolkit, and contact araorganizing@retiredamericans.org to let us know of your plans.

On Thursday, thirty state Alliance Presidents wrote a letter to President Obama, delivering the message directly that he has "the opportunity to renew the nation's commitment to the Social Security program during the State of the Union Address," and urging him to reject false claims that Social Security increases the federal budget deficit. To see the letter, go to <http://bit.ly/dK1pBa>. "Social Security did not create our nation's fiscal problems, nor should it be used to fix them," summarized **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "The current debt situation should not be a political cover for attacking Social Security."

House Moves to Replace Health Care Law

On Wednesday, House Republicans took a first major step toward repealing health care reform. The repeal bill - H.R. 2 - passed 245 to 189, with unanimous GOP support, along with that of three Democrats. The three House Democrats who voted in favor of the repeal were Reps. **Mike Ross** (AR), **Mike McIntyre** (NC), and **Dan Boren** (OK). All three also voted against health care reform last year. However, Senate Majority Leader **Harry Reid** (D-NV) has vowed the legislation will go nowhere in the Senate, and President Obama has said he would veto it if it comes to his desk. A tally of the Wednesday vote is available at <http://bit.ly/e4DXWb>.

Alliance members had sent more than 1,200 letters to their U.S. Representatives prior to the vote, making a strong case against the repeal. "Alliance members always come through when key votes are imminent," said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. "Thank you to everyone who sent a letter saying that they don't want health reform repealed. Health care will be at least a year-long fight...Wednesday's vote was just the beginning. The best way to save the reform law is to make sure people know how it helps them. Far too few currently do, and that is fueling the repeal movement."

On Thursday, the House adopted H.Res. 9, a resolution instructing four committees to report legislation to the House that would replace the health care law with proposed changes to existing

law within each committee's jurisdiction. The vote was 253-175, with a tally available at <http://bit.ly/gwxJeQ>. Fourteen Democrats joined Republicans in supporting the resolution. The vote begins a GOP-led process to take apart the health care reform law piece by piece.

On Tuesday, the Democratic staff of the House Energy and Commerce Committee released a report on how efforts to repeal health care reform would negatively affect each congressional district. Included in the report is an interactive map with links to each member of Congress and information on how many people fall into the doughnut hole, how many are receiving early retiree coverage help, and other health care facts. To view the link, go to <http://bit.ly/frChYr>.

New Hospital Regulations Put Visitation in Patients' Hands

An initiative that began with a directive from President Obama has culminated in the new Hospital Visitation Regulations, which went into effect on Tuesday of this week. The new regulations ensure that all hospitals that participate in Medicare and Medicaid respect patients' rights to designate visitors. Additionally, the regulation removes restrictions on bedside visitors and requires hospitals to make their visitation policy available, in writing, to all patients. "Anyone who has been hospitalized or has visited a loved one in the hospital knows the anxiety that it can bring," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "This change in regulation helps to alleviate some of the stress that patients may experience, and will benefit all Americans."

Trumka Stresses Social Security in Speech About Protecting the Middle Class

In a speech on Wednesday morning, AFL-CIO President **Richard Trumka** criticized the billionaire business titans who are part of "a coordinated effort to block the path to the middle class with an attack on workers' rights." He specifically called out **Lloyd Blankfein**, the Goldman Sachs CEO who has made almost \$100 million from cashing in stock options since 1999. Trumka warned politicians not to cut social programs during this time of economic hardship, stating, "Outside the looking glass, Americans won't forgive their leaders for cutting Social Security or Medicare." He stated that in order for the nation to move forward, "We should act like the wealthy, compassionate, imaginative country we are — not try to turn ourselves into a third-rate, impoverished has-been."

Member Profile Highlights the Danger of Raising the Retirement Age

A recent article by **Diana Jean Schemo** entitled "Ball and Chain: the Human Cost of Raising the Retirement Age" highlights the perils of working later in life. The article spotlights California Alliance (CARA) leader **Hene Kelly**, who taught for 40 years in Chicago, Oakland and San Francisco. Check it out here: <http://bit.ly/g4V6wU>.

Alliance Mourns Death of Missouri's Bob Kortkamp

Bob Kortkamp, the founder of the Missouri Alliance, a co-founder and board member of the national Alliance, and a regional board member, died on Thursday. A retired Machinist, Kortkamp served as the Missouri Alliance's first president and organized retirees in opposing Social Security privatization. Described by one activist as a "civic icon," Kortkamp was a long-serving Secretary-Treasurer of the St. Louis Labor Council and was a leader on a number of local and state issues. "We are deeply saddened by the loss of Bob," said Mr. Coyle. "He will be missed, but he leaves behind a legacy of accomplishments." Further information will be available next week.