



November 25, 2013 E-Newsletter

HAPPY THANKSGIVING



Thanksgiving Day is an American tradition. Like any holiday in the United States, it has been commemorated and remembered in a number of ways through the years.

Here's a compilation of some of the best, most famous quotes related to Thanksgiving, from some of America's most well-known citizens as well as lesser-known citizens who had a way with words:

"The unthankful heart... discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and, as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings!" -Henry Ward Beecher

"Thanksgiving dinners take eighteen hours to prepare. They are consumed in twelve minutes. Half-times take twelve minutes. This is not coincidence." -Erma Bombeck

"Thanksgiving, after all, is a word of action." - W.J. Cameron

"If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, "thank you," that would suffice." -Meister Eckhart

"For flowers that bloom about our feet; For tender grass, so fresh, so sweet; For song of bird, and hum of bee; For all things fair we hear or see, Father in heaven, we thank Thee!" -Ralph Waldo Emerson

"If you want to turn your life around, try thankfulness. It will change your life mightily." -Gerald Good

"So once in every year we throng Upon a day apart, To praise the Lord with feast and song In thankfulness of heart." -Arthur Guiterman

"Praise God even when you don't understand what He is doing." -Henry Jacobsen

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." -John Fitzgerald Kennedy

"An optimist is a person who starts a new diet on Thanksgiving Day." -Irv Kupcinet

"Thanksgiving was never meant to be shut up in a single day." -Robert Caspar Lintner

"Thanksgiving Day comes, by statute, once a year; to the honest man it comes as frequently as the heart of gratitude will allow." -Edward Sandford Martin

"Our rural ancestors, with little blest, Patient of labour when the end was rest, Indulged the day that housed their annual grain, With feasts, and offerings, and a thankful strain." -Alexander Pope

"Thanksgiving Day is a jewel, to set in the hearts of honest men; but be careful that you do not take the day, and leave out the gratitude." -E.P. Powell

"The Pilgrims made seven times more graves than huts. No Americans have been more impoverished than these who, nevertheless, set aside a day of thanksgiving." -H.U. Westermayer

From the Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans to all it's members and their families; A special greeting of Thanksgiving time to express to you and your families our sincere appreciation for your confidence and loyalty.

We are deeply thankful and extend to you our best wishes for a happy and healthy Thanksgiving Day.

FURTHER INCOME-RELATING (MEANS TESTING) MEDICARE PREMIUMS WOULD SHIFT MORE COSTS ONTO THE MIDDLE CLASS

The Medicare program provides vital health insurance coverage to approximately 50 million Americans. While Medicare offers coverage for a range of health care services, it is neither comprehensive in scope nor is it without cost to beneficiaries. In addition to cost-sharing for certain services, most people pay a monthly Part B premium of \$104.90 (2013 and 2014)ⁱ and many also pay additional premiums for coverage under a Medicare Advantage plan, a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan, a Medigap plan or some other type of supplemental insurance.

Among proposals discussed to lower Medicare spending is to further income-relate, or means test, Medicare premiums based upon beneficiaries' income. Yet, Medicare beneficiaries with incomes above \$85,000 (\$170,000 for a couple) already pay higher Part B premiums due to a provision in the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010 required higher-income individuals to also start paying higher Part D premiums in 2011 and froze the income limits (\$85,000 individual/\$170,000 couple) through 2019 so that each year more people will be subject to higher premiums for Parts B and D.

Legislation recently drafted by the U.S. House Committee on Ways & Means that was also included in the President's FY2014 budget proposal would increase already higher premiums while also forcing a larger share of the Medicare population to pay more, eventually affecting one in four beneficiaries. At the same time, this proposal would introduce additional, needless complexity in an already overcomplicated system, creating nine tiers of income-related premiums where today there are five.ⁱⁱ A less complicated, but equally damaging proposal is advanced by the Medicare Fair Share Act (S. 1198), introduced Senator McCaskill (D-MO) and Senator Coburn (R-OK), which would require Medicare beneficiaries with annual incomes above \$50,000—rather than the current \$85,000 threshold—to pay higher income-related premiums.ⁱⁱⁱ

Our Position:

LCAO opposes further income-relating (means testing) Medicare premiums. Over the last several years, Congress imposed greater costs on higher-income individuals through higher Part B and D premiums. Going further will negatively impact middle-class beneficiaries and will do nothing to rein in overall health care costs. LCAO recognizes the need to reduce federal health care spending. With respect to Medicare, we support savings mechanisms that address system-wide health care inflation and build on the cost savings and efficiencies of the ACA. Further income-relating Medicare premiums, however, would only create federal savings by shifting additional costs onto Medicare beneficiaries.

Our Rationale:

Wealthier Medicare beneficiaries already pay more. Medicare beneficiaries with incomes above \$85,000 for an individual/\$170,000 for a couple already pay higher premiums for Medicare Parts B and D. In 2014, higher-income individuals will pay between \$146.90 and \$335.70 per month for Part B and an extra \$12.10 to \$69.30 per month for Part D premiums. Today, income-related Part B premiums apply to approximately 5% (2.4 million) of Medicare beneficiaries.

Income levels are frozen under current law so more people will be subject to higher premiums. Under current law, income thresholds are frozen until 2019, meaning they are not indexed to increase annually. At that time, it is estimated that approximately 10% of Medicare beneficiaries will have incomes above this threshold and will be subject to higher premiums. If higher premiums were applied to Medicare beneficiaries with the top 10% of income today, it would affect people earning approximately \$63,000.

Some proposals to expand means testing could apply to someone living on as little as \$47,000 today. As noted above, some proposals to expand Medicare means testing would increase income-related premiums under Parts B and D until 25% of beneficiaries are subject to these premiums. According to a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation, if such a proposal were implemented today, this would affect individuals with income equivalent to \$47,000 for an individual and \$94,000 for a couple. In other words, this would impact individuals earning almost half of the current income threshold of \$85,000.

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Medicare costs are already high. In addition to any Medicare premiums required of beneficiaries, under the Traditional Medicare program, individuals are responsible for a 20% coinsurance for Part B services after meeting a \$147 deductible (2013 and 2014); cost-sharing under Part A includes a hospital deductible of \$1,216 for 2014. Health care costs are already a significant expense for Medicare beneficiaries, and are increasing; families on Medicare already pay more of their household budgets for health care (15% on average, compared to 5% for non-Medicare households). Requiring more people with less income to pay more of their Medicare premiums will only increase these burdens.

Incomes of \$47,000, \$50,000 do not meet the threshold as a definition of wealth. Most Americans do not consider an income of \$47,000 or \$50,000 to be wealthy. According to a 2011 national Gallup poll, Americans claim they need an annual income of \$150,000 to qualify as “rich,” up from \$120,000 in a 2003 Gallup poll. Further, recent policy standards established by the ACA raise questions about whether an income of \$47,000 or \$50,000 qualifies a person as wealthy, or instead, as deserving of assistance to help pay for health care costs. Under the ACA, an individual living on an annual income at or below 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL) (\$45,960 in 2013) will be eligible for a premium tax credit towards the cost of private health insurance premiums starting in 2014. Accounting for inflation, it can be expected that an income of \$50,000 will equate to 400% FPL in the near term.

Further means testing undermines the integrity and universality of Medicare. Medicare has enjoyed consistent, broad-based support as insurance for people over 65 and certain individuals under 65 with disabilities. Additional means testing would further undermine the social insurance nature of Medicare and could ultimately raise costs for middle and lower-income individuals who rely on it. As noted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, “there is a possibility that proposals [to further means test Medicare] could lead some higher-income beneficiaries to drop out of Medicare Part B and self-insure, which could result in higher premiums for all others who remain on Medicare.”

Richard Fiesta Named Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans



Richard J. Fiesta has been named the Alliance for Retired Americans’ new Executive Director, succeeding Edward F. Coyle, who has managed and grown the four million member grassroots advocacy organization since its 2001 founding. The Alliance’s Executive Board voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Fiesta, effective December 1, 2013.

Mr. Fiesta, the Director of the Department of Government and Political Affairs for the Alliance since 2001, pledged that the organization will aggressively educate retirees, the public, and lawmakers on ways to preserve and strengthen Social Security and Medicare, make prescription drugs affordable for future generations and ensure that all retirees can expect a dignified retirement after a lifetime of work.

“Ed Coyle launched the Alliance for Retired Americans and built it into a national voice for seniors,” said Barbara J. Easterling, President of the Alliance. “It is gratifying to see Ed enjoy his own retirement after improving the retirement circumstances of so many others. I know that Rich will continue the Alliance for Retired Americans’ tradition of standing up for seniors.”

“I would not retire if I didn’t believe that the Alliance is in good hands,” said Mr. Coyle. “Rich Fiesta has made a career of fighting for social and economic justice for retirees and the middle class. He believes deeply in the power of grassroots organizing and collective action. He will be a great Executive Director.”

“I am honored to become the Alliance Executive Director, given our proven track record of advocacy and action,” said Fiesta. “Older Americans face many challenges. I look forward to building on our work to guarantee that the needs of retirees remain at the forefront of the nation’s agenda.”

“Rich Fiesta knows what action and legislation is crucial for retirees, and he knows the intricacies of the Social Security and Medicare programs,” said Richard Trumka, President of the AFL-CIO. “There is no one I would rather have leading retirees, community activists, and staff.”

Prior to 2001, Mr. Fiesta, a native of Connellsville, Pennsylvania, served in the Clinton Administration in congressional and public affairs positions at the Departments of Labor and the Interior. He worked in Congress as counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Labor Standards and in senior positions in the offices of Senators Harris Wofford (D-PA) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD). He practiced law concentrating on labor and retirement issues. He will also chair the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations for 2013-2014. He received his bachelors, masters, and law degrees from Georgetown University and studied in the legal history program at the University of Virginia.

“I look forward to working with Rich as we head into the critical election season of 2014,” said Ruben Burks, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Retirees feel safe knowing that Rich will be channeling the energy of the Alliance’s four million members as they act to preserve and protect seniors’ earned benefits.”



For Our Wife, Daughters & Sisters

John DePetro's reputation as an abrasive misogynist is widely known, but his latest attack on women can't go unanswered. His recent labeling of women protesters outside at a political event as "whores" is offensive, unacceptable and un-American. Click on the video and take action by signing the petition asking WPRO advertiser

SIGN THE PETITION TO STOP ATTACKS ON WOMEN

Alex and Ani to stop funding Rhode Island's loudest hate machine.

5 companies paying Americans the least

By Michael B. Sauter, Thomas C Frohlich, and Alexander E.M. Hess, 24/7 Wall St.

While companies such as Wal-Mart and McDonald's have seen profits grow in recent years, most of their workers continue to earn low or minimum wages.

This summer, thousands of fast-food workers in the United States went on strike in cities across the country, demanding their wages be increased to \$15 an hour and the ability to unionize. To no one's surprise, they didn't get it. As of 2012, an estimated 4.7% of hourly workers are paid at or below the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. According to several groups, low- and minimum-wage workers are growing faster than any other group of earners.



Meanwhile, profits at many of the corporations that employ the most minimum-wage workers have risen. McDonald's, Walmart and Target together employ several million Americans. While these companies' profits have grown in recent years, most of their workers continue to earn low or minimum wages.

Based on the methodology used by the National Employment Law Project in its 2012 report "Big Business, Corporate Profits, and the Minimum Wage," 24/7 Wall St. identified the companies in industries that are primarily low-wage employers. Based on annual reports and proxy filings, we also reviewed the total size of the companies' workforces, the recent performance of the corporations in terms of revenue and profit, and the highest executive pay at these companies....[Read More](#)

Here are the figures from three of the BIGGEST

Yum Brands

U. S. Workforce

694,712

Revenue

\$13.6 Billion

Net income

\$1.6 Billion

CEO Compensation

\$14 Million

Hourly Wages for workers @

KFC, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut

Less than \$8.00

per hour

Mc Donalds

U. S. Workforce

739,055

Revenue

\$27.6 Billion

Net income

\$5.5 Billion

CEO Compensation

\$13.8 Million

Hourly Wages for workers @

14,157 U. S. Stores

Just over \$9.00

per hour

Wal-Mart

U. S. Workforce

1.4 Million

Revenue

\$469 Billion

Net income

\$17.0 Billion

CEO Compensation

\$20.7 Million

Hourly Wages for workers @

4,759 U. S. Stores

Less than \$9.00

per hour