



October 7, 2013 E-Newsletter

Seniors Join Hands at U.S. Capitol to Show:

“We will not allow a Government Shutdown to Force Cuts to our Benefits!”

*The following statement was issued on October 3, 2013 by
Edward F. Coyle, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans.*



“Today scores of seniors came to the U.S. Capitol, joined hands with more than 20 Members of Congress, and formed a human chain in opposition to the Chained CPI cost-of-living adjustment formula and all benefit cuts to Social Security.

“By doing so, they sent a message: We are standing up for our hard-earned benefits and will not allow a government shutdown to force cuts to our Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid!

“But today was also a part of a timely revolt against Republicans' hostage taking strategy. Whether shutting down the government to protest Obamacare or using a debt crisis to force the Chained CPI on seniors, Americans have had enough. “Both current and future Social Security beneficiaries need to know the truth: the **Chained CPI is not some harmless, technical change. It's a benefit cut.**

“Americans are already struggling to get by in retirement, as employer pensions are disappearing and only the wealthiest Americans get significant income from 401(k)s.

“If the shutdown and debt crisis are merged in the coming weeks, and the debt ceiling is not raised, seniors also may not receive Social Security checks, Medicare reimbursements and a host of other necessities.

“The Alliance's 4 million members are watching closely and remaining hopeful that Washington finds a way to do the right thing – that certainly doesn't mean wrongly trying to solve the country's budget problems on the backs of our seniors.

Response from our Rhode Island Congressional Delegation

From Senators Reed & Whitehouse's staff because of the Government shutdown:

Thank you for your email. We are currently out of the office due to the federal government shutdown, and do not have access to email during this time. We will respond to your message as soon as possible upon our return to the office.



From Congressman Langevin: “We made a promise to our seniors, and it is a promise that I intend to keep,” said Congressman Jim Langevin (D-RI). “We can make Social Security solvent without harming beneficiaries. Any cuts to Social Security are unacceptable, and a move to a Chained CPI calculation would amount to a significant reduction in benefits for the seniors who have earned those benefits by contributing to the Trust Fund over decades of hard work.”

From Congressman Cicilline: “Social Security is a promise we made to seniors in Rhode Island and across this country that after a lifetime of hard work they will be able to retire with economic security. It is critical that we remain united against any proposed cuts in benefits,” said Congressman David N. Cicilline. “I am proud to stand with so many dedicated advocates to oppose the use of chained CPI, and I will continue to work hard to protect Social Security and Medicare for Rhode Island seniors.”



Chained CPI Affects More Than Social Security COLA, Seniors Would Get Less, Pay More

The Seniors Citizens League (TSCL) continues to be an unrelenting fighter to preserve Social Security and the cost-of-living allowance now in place - COLA for 2014 should be announced this month

By Tucker Sutherland, editor

Oct. 2, 2013 – While most of the media attention on the U.S. government is focused on the Republican efforts to defund the Affordable Care Act, and the government shutdown this has caused, many seniors are worrying more about their Social Security and the cost-of-living allowance (COLA) increase that is normally announced in October. And, too, there is plenty of concern about a proposal to change the way the COLA is determined – using a different consumer price index – that most experts predict will significantly decrease these increases.

The Seniors Citizens League (TSCL), which claims to be one of the nation’s largest nonpartisan seniors groups, has probably been the most active in fighting to preserve Social Security and the current method of determining the COLA. “Most seniors are aware of the impact of the consumer price index (CPI) on their cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs). But a widely-debated deficit reduction proposal that would switch to the more slowly-growing ‘chained’ CPI to determine COLAs would have far greater impact than Social Security cuts alone if applied government-wide, warns TSCL...[Read More](#)

The Alliance for Retired Americans & RI ARA also strongly fight against the Chained CPI. The Chained CPI — How Seniors Get Less And Pay More

Program	What Chained CPI Affects	Impact on Seniors
Income taxes	Tax brackets, personal exemptions, deductions	Higher taxes as tax brackets, exemptions, and deductions rise more slowly.
Social Security — retirement, survivors, disability benefits	COLAs	Lower lifetime benefits –Seniors with average benefits of \$14,400 in 2013 would lose an estimated \$27,500 over a 30-year retirement.
Medicare	Some benefits indexed annually	Less generous coverage such as, lower Part D initial coverage amounts leaving seniors at risk of higher out-of-pocket costs due to hitting doughnut hole.
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	COLAs	Lower SSI benefits over the period they are received.
Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps)	Benefit amount, income eligibility guidelines	Food stamp benefits would grow more slowly, fewer low-income seniors would qualify.
Civil Service and Federal Employees Retirement Systems	COLAs	Lower lifetime benefits.
Military Retirement System	COLAs	Lower lifetime benefits.
Military Dependency and Indemnity Compensation	COLAs	Lower benefits for survivors.
Veterans’ Disability Compensation	COLAs	Lower benefits.
Veterans’ Pensions	COLAs	Lower lifetime pension payouts.
Railroad Retirement, Tier 1, Tier II benefits	COLAs	Lower lifetime benefits
Medicaid	Eligibility for long-term care services and supports	Fewer low-income seniors would qualify for nursing home care, or would have longer “spend down” waiting periods.

Senior Citizen League Projecting Small 1.5% COLA for Social Security in 2014 SSA should make it official on October 15, after September CPI is calculated; advocates keeping close eye on chained CPI proposed by Obama, CPI for elderly ignored for years

By Tucker Sutherland, editor, SeniorJournal.com

Oct. 3, 2013 – Senior citizens will get a very small increase in their Social Security benefit next year, according to the current projection by The Senior Citizens League. With only the cost of living change for September to go to complete the calculation, the 2014 COLA (cost-of-living allowance) will be about 1.5%, according to Shannon Benton, Executive Director of TSCL. The official word from SSA is expected on October 15.

“If this proves to be correct,” says Benton, “then the average COLA paid over the past five years was 1.4%. This would be a record low period since the COLA became automatic.”... [Read More](#)

Average Social Security Benefits	2012	2013	% Ch. 2014	\$ Ch. 2014	2014
All Retired Workers	\$1,240	\$1,261	1.50%	\$19	\$1,280
Aged Couple, Both Receiving Benefits	\$2,014	\$2,048	1.50%	\$31	\$2,079
Widowed Mother and Two Children	\$2,549	\$2,592	1.50%	\$39	\$2,631
Aged Widow(er) Alone	\$1,194	\$1,214	1.50%	\$18	\$1,232
Disabled Worker, Spouse and One or More Children	\$1,887	\$1,919	1.50%	\$29	\$1,948
All Disabled Workers	\$1,113	\$1,132	1.50%	\$17	\$1,149
This chart assumes a 1.5% increase in the Social Security COLA for 2014 and estimates increases					

Video Explains Affordable Care Act as it Applies to Seniors

Kaiser Health News’s Mary Agnes Carey appeared on the PBS Newshour last to answer questions from seniors uncertain of how the Affordable Care Act will affect older Americans and what changes are coming for Medicare recipients. That video is available at <http://tinyurl.com/onj5mm5>.

On Tuesday, October 1, 2013, the online health insurance marketplaces — the centerpiece of President Obama’s health-care law — opened for business despite the government shutdown. The plan is for millions of Americans to go online to compare health plans, find out if they’re eligible for federal help with premiums and buy coverage. The Obama Administration acknowledged that the debut was not flawless - with some computer glitches - but officials expect the kinks to be ironed out soon.

An exchange is a Web site designed to make it easy to find health coverage. Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries aren’t eligible for them. Those who are in the country illegally are barred from them, and most workers at bigger companies that provide health coverage won’t use them.

Each state will have an exchange. Some states are running their own; the rest are either partnering with the federal government or relying on the federal government to operate theirs. Exchanges are designed for the uninsured, people who buy their own coverage, and those whose employer-provided coverage is too expensive or lacks important benefits. Initial open enrollment is Oct. 1 through March 31. Those who are eligible can find an exchange at www.healthcare.gov.

Even Healthy Senior Citizens Struggle with Decision-Making and Avoid Risk With increased age comes decreased risk-taking in decision-making, finds new study

Oct. 4, 2013 - When a senior citizen has trouble making a decision, and seems to be seeking the choice with the least risk, many may be prone to suggest there is some dementia involved. Not so, finds a new study – people are just less able to make decisions as they age. And, when they do, they are most likely to choose the safest option.

The study by researchers at Yale School of Medicine also concluded that older people are more risk-averse than their midlife counterparts when choosing between possible gains, but more risk-seeking when choosing between losses... [Read More](#)

