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Affiliated with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO
“Fighting for the future of our members.”
“NOW, more than ever!!!”



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Our voice was heard



Blog

Because of the hard work from advocates across the country, the U.S. House of Representatives failed to vote on the American Health Care Act (AHCA) today—a victory for older

Americans, people with disabilities, and their families.

The AHCA advanced policies to yank coverage out from under 24 million Americans, impose an unaffordable “age tax” on older Americans, end Medicaid as we know it, and undermine the Medicare guarantee.

These proposals undercut our core mission and violate our driving principles—to ensure older adults and people with disabilities are assured access to affordable, high-quality health care. Many of you helped us convey this message to your members of Congress, and we thank you.

The message was heard loud and clear, but our work continues.

On behalf of the Alliance *for* Retired Americans and all its affiliated chapters, including the RI ARA, thank you to all the people that helped defeat the AHCA the ACA replacement. We can all be proud of the efforts that went into its demise. Our RI Congressional members, as did many other congressional members, put up a great fight on our behalf. However, we won this battle, but the bigger war is still to be fought. It will take all our efforts to win that war.

Repeal of Affordable Care Act Is Back on Agenda, Republicans Say

Under extreme pressure from conservative activists, House Republican leaders and the White House have restarted negotiations on legislation to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

But efforts to revive the legislation in the House could take weeks, lawmakers conceded, as Congress moves forward with a full plate of other time-consuming issues. And the renewed push did not meet with much enthusiasm from Senate Republicans, who said they had other priorities at the moment.

Nonetheless, Speaker Paul D. Ryan vowed to renew efforts to repeal the law, despite last’s week crushing setback when House Republicans tossed aside a repeal bill because they lacked the votes to pass it.

Just days after President Trump said he was moving on to other issues, senior administration officials said they still hoped to score the kind of big legislative victory that has so far eluded the White House. Vice President Mike Pence was dispatched to Capitol Hill on Tuesday for

lunchtime talks.

“We’re not going to retrench into our corners or put up dividing lines,” Mr. Ryan said after a meeting of House Republicans was dominated by talk of how to restart health negotiations. “There’s too much at stake to get bogged down in all that,” he added.

Democrats had celebrated what they thought was the demise of the repeal bill on Friday. But the House Republican whip, Steve Scalise of Louisiana, said on Tuesday, “Their celebration is premature.”

“I think we’re closer today to repealing Obamacare than we’ve ever been before, and surely even closer than we were Friday,” Mr. Scalise said.

It is not clear what political dynamics might have changed since Friday, when a coalition of hard-line conservatives and more moderate Republicans torpedoed legislation to repeal President Barack Obama’s signature domestic achievement.

“I don’t know what has changed,” said Representative Jim McGovern, Democrat

of Massachusetts. “The bill went down because it was too bad for Republican moderates and not bad enough for their conservatives. I don’t know how they reconcile the divides within their own conference, never mind find any Democratic votes.”

The Republicans’ repeal bill, according to the Congressional Budget Office, would have left **an additional** 24 million Americans without insurance by 2026, a major worry for moderate Republicans. It would also have left in place regulations on the **health insurance** industry that are anathema to conservatives.

Mr. Ryan declined to say what might be in the next version of the Republicans’ repeal bill, nor would he sketch any schedule for action. But he said Congress needed to act because insurers were developing premiums and benefit packages for health plans to offer in 2018, with review by federal and state officials beginning soon. ... **Read More**



Trump taps Kushner to lead a SWAT team to fix government with business ideas



President Trump plans to unveil a new White House office on Monday with sweeping authority to overhaul the federal

bureaucracy and fulfill key campaign promises — such as reforming care for veterans and fighting opioid addiction — by harvesting ideas from the business world and, potentially, privatizing some government functions.

The White House Office of American Innovation, to be led by Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, will operate as its own nimble power center within the West Wing and will report directly to Trump. Viewed internally as a SWAT team of strategic consultants, the office will be staffed by former business executives and is designed to infuse fresh thinking into

Washington, float above the daily political grind and create a lasting legacy for a president still searching for signature achievements.

"All Americans, regardless of their political views, can recognize that government stagnation has hindered our ability to properly function, often creating widespread congestion and leading to cost overruns and delays," Trump said in a statement to The Washington Post. "I promised the American people I would produce results, and apply my 'ahead of schedule, under budget' mentality to the government."

In a White House riven at times by disorder and competing factions, the innovation office represents an expansion of Kushner's already far-reaching influence. The 36-year-old former real estate and media executive will continue

to wear many hats, driving foreign and domestic policy as well as decisions on presidential personnel. He also is a shadow diplomat, serving as Trump's lead adviser on relations with China, Mexico, Canada and the Middle East.

The work of White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon has drawn considerable attention, especially after his call for the "deconstruction of the administrative state." But Bannon will have no formal role in the innovation office, which Trump advisers described as an incubator of sleek transformation as opposed to deconstruction. ...[Read More](#)

The question is, can you run the US government like a business????

And then there is this, "Senate Committee to Question Jared Kushner Over Meetings With Russians"

Justice Department Joins Lawsuit Alleging Massive Medicare Fraud By UnitedHealth



The Justice Department has joined a California whistleblower's lawsuit that accuses insurance giant UnitedHealth

Group of fraud in its popular Medicare Advantage health plans.

Justice officials filed legal papers to intervene in the suit, first brought by whistleblower James Swoben in 2009, on Friday in federal court in Los Angeles. On

Monday, they sought a court order to combine Swoben's case with that of another whistleblower.

Swoben has accused the insurer of "gaming" the Medicare Advantage payment system by "making patients look sicker than they are," said his attorney, William K. Hanagami. Hanagami said the combined cases could prove to be among the "larger frauds" ever against Medicare, with damages that he speculates could top \$1 billion.



UnitedHealth spokesman Matt Burns denied any wrongdoing by the company. "We are honored to serve millions of seniors through Medicare Advantage, proud of the access to quality health care we provided, and confident we complied with program rules," he wrote in an email. ...[Read More](#)

Many Americans Think They Need \$1M for Retirement, Half Have



Only about two-fifths of American workers have actually sat down and tried to figure

out how much they'll need for retirement. And for many, that target sum is a doozy.

The 27th iteration of the Employee Benefit Research Institute's annual retirement confidence survey on Tuesday found that only 41 percent of nearly 1,700 U.S. employees surveyed have sized up how large their nest egg will need to be to propel them through a comfortable

retirement — and just 61 percent have saved for retirement at all.

All told, only 10 percent of the country's workers have established some sort of formal retirement plan. But the other 90 percent may be in for a rude awakening, as 37 percent of those who've tried to calculate what they'll need to leave the labor market for good think they'll need at least \$1 million. Nearly two-thirds think they'll need at least \$500,000.

"Not surprisingly, savings goals tend to increase with household income," the

report said. "In particular, those with household incomes of at least \$75,000 are almost three times as likely as those with lower incomes to report they need to accumulate at least \$1 million for retirement (50 percent vs. 17 percent of those with incomes under \$35,000)."

Still, nearly half of respondents said they have less than \$25,000 saved up for retirement. And nearly a quarter — 24 percent — have less than \$1,000 to put toward their golden years. ...[Read More](#)

Trump moves decisively to wipe out Obama's climate-change record



President Trump will take the most significant step yet in obliterating

his predecessor's environmental record Tuesday, instructing federal regulators to rewrite key rules curbing U.S. carbon emissions.

The sweeping executive order also seeks to lift a moratorium on federal coal leasing and remove the requirement that federal officials consider the impact of climate change when making decisions.

The order sends an unmistakable signal that just as President Barack Obama sought to weave climate considerations into every aspect of the federal

government, Trump is hoping to rip that approach out by its roots.

"This policy is in keeping with President Trump's desire to make the United States energy independent," said a senior administration official who briefed reporters on the directive Monday evening and asked for anonymity to speak in advance of the announcement. "When it comes to climate change, we want to take our course and do it in our own form and fashion."

Some of the measures could take years to implement and are unlikely to alter broader economic trends that are shifting the nation's electricity mix from coal-fired generation to natural gas and renewables. The order is silent on whether

the United States should withdraw from the 2015 Paris climate agreement, under which it has pledged to cut its greenhouse gas emissions between 26 and 28 percent by 2025 compared to 2005 levels, because the administration **remains divided** on that question.

The order comes after several moves by Trump to roll back Obama-era restrictions on mining, drilling and coal- and gas-burning operations. In his first two months as president, Trump has nullified a regulation barring surface-mining companies from polluting waterways and set aside a new accounting system that would have compelled coal companies and other energy firms to pay more in federal royalties... [Read More](#)

Trump not concerned about Mar-a-lago costs, criticism



President Trump isn't concerned about the rising costs associated with his regular trips to

his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Fla., the White House press secretary said Wednesday.

Sean Spicer addressed the topic during his briefing, when asked by Fox 5 DC's Ronica Cleary if Trump has "any concerns about the pushback" from Florida residents and taxpayers about those costs.

"No, he feels great," Spicer said.

Spicer added that such criticism did not play into Trump's decision to stay in Washington, D.C., last weekend and noted that Trump plans to remain in town this upcoming weekend as well.

Trump has spent five weekends at Mar-a-Lago since his inauguration nine weeks ago. Critics have chided the president for those visits because of the travel and security costs associated with the trips.

This week, Democratic lawmakers successfully **queried** the Government Accountability Office to study the costs, as well as the security and handling of classified information associated with Trump's stays in Palm Beach.

Last month, Democrats criticized Trump for working with staff on a response to a North Korean missile launch in part in public spaces at his resort.

And this week, the Democratic lawmaker whose district includes the Mar-a-Lago estate **asked** the White House to alleviate the "financial burden" of his

near-weekly visits.

Yet we can't afford Meals on Wheels

After visiting with Becky in Warwick today, I was reminded once again of the incredible difference Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island makes by providing homebound seniors with nutritious meals and a connection to the



Senator Whitehouse

community. While President Trump's budget proposal would jeopardize programs like this, I'm committed to standing up for our seniors and making sure those reckless cuts don't come to pass.

Obamacare's Not In A 'Death Spiral'



Republican leaders say they will table health care talks following the defeat of the House GOP to

replace Obamacare. As House Speaker Paul Ryan put it, "Obamacare is the law of the land."

But some conservatives say that President Barack Obama's signature piece of legislation can't last much longer, regardless of whether Congress finds a legislative compromise.

"It is in a death spiral," conservative

radio host Hugh Hewitt said March 26 on *Meet the Press*. "The New York Times yesterday pointed out that — the president of Aetna — that you will lose coverage in many places in America for everyone, and that to me is a death spiral for those people."

The idea that Obamacare is in a "death spiral" — a specific term used in the health insurance industry — is a claim that we've heard before. Experts say Hewitt is incorrect.

We reached out to Hewitt through his

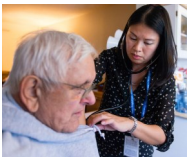
radio program but did not hear back.

Still no 'death spiral'

"Death spiral" is a health industry term built around three components:

Specifically, a death spiral occurs when shrinking enrollment leads to a deteriorating risk pool (or when healthy people leave the plan due to the cost). That leads to higher premiums for the people remaining in the insurance pools, which causes enrollment to shrink even further, continuing the cycle until the entire system fails... [Read More](#)

'Pre-Hospice' Saves Money By Keeping People At Home Near The End Of Life



Gerald Chinchar isn't quite at the end of life, but the end is not far away. The 77-year-old fell twice last year, shattering his hip and femur, and now gets around his San Diego home in a wheelchair. His medications fill a dresser drawer, and congestive heart failure puts him at high risk of emergency room visits and long hospital stays.

Chinchar, a Navy veteran who loves TV Westerns, said that's the last thing he wants. He still likes to go watch his grandchildren's sporting events and play blackjack at the casino. "If they told me I had six months to live or go to the hospital and last two years, I'd say leave me home," Chinchar said. "That ain't no trade for me."

Most aging people would choose to **stay home** in their last years of life. But for

many, it doesn't work out: They go in and out of hospitals, getting treated for flare-ups of various chronic illnesses. It's a massive problem that costs the health care system billions of dollars and has galvanized health providers, hospital administrators and policymakers to search for solutions.

Sharp HealthCare, the San Diego health system where Chinchar receives care, has devised a way to fulfill his wishes and reduce costs at the same time. It's a pre-hospice program called Transitions, designed to give elderly patients the care they want at home and keep them out of the hospital.

Social workers and nurses from Sharp regularly visit patients in their homes to explain what they can expect in their final years, help them make end-of-life plans and teach them how to better manage their

diseases. Physicians track their health and scrap unnecessary medications. Unlike hospice care, patients don't need to have a prognosis of six months or less, and they can continue getting curative treatment for their illnesses, not just for symptoms.

Before the Transitions program started, the only option for many patients in a health crisis was to call 911 and be rushed to the emergency room. Now, they have round-the-clock access to nurses, one phone call away.

"Transitions is for just that point where people are starting to realize they can see the end of the road," said San Diego physician Dan Hoefler, one of the creators of the program. "We are trying to help them through that process so it's not filled with chaos." ...[Read More](#)

Alzheimer's linked to unsaturated fatty acids in the brain

While it is not yet clear what causes Alzheimer's disease, researchers are examining a variety of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle causes. New research examines some of the key brain regions involved in the development of Alzheimer's and finds several fatty acids to be associated with this form of dementia.

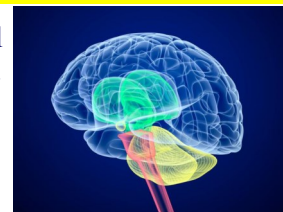
The Alzheimer's Association estimate that every **66 seconds**, an adult in the United States develops **Alzheimer's disease** (AD). Alzheimer's-related mortality has increased by as much as 89 percent since the year 2000.

Researchers are hard at work trying to

understand what **causes** AD. It is estimated that the disease affects **1 in 3** older adults in the U.S., and understanding why Alzheimer's tends to strike seniors, in particular, is at the heart of the medical community's research efforts.

Researchers are studying late-onset Alzheimer's in the context of age-related brain changes. A new study - **published** in the journal *PLOS Medicine* - looks at how fatty acid metabolites in the brain tissue of healthy seniors behave and affect the participants' cognitive abilities.

The international research team - led by Cristina Legido-Quigley of King's College London in the United



Kingdom, and Madhav Thambisetty of the National Institute on Aging in the U.S. - conducted a nontargeted metabolite profiling study that analyzed the concentration of 100 different fatty acid metabolites in the brain tissues of seniors who participated in the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging....[Read More](#)

Drinking tea could help stave off cognitive decline



Thanks to its high levels of antioxidants, tea has been linked to a lower risk of diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. However, its potential health benefits may not end there. Researchers have found that regular tea consumption could more than halve the risk of cognitive decline for older

adults, particularly for those with a genetic risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Tea is one of the most popular beverages in the United States; in 2015, more than **3.6 billion gallons** of tea were consumed in the country, with black tea being the favorite.

The possible health benefits of tea consumption have been well documented. A recent **study** published in *The*

American Journal of Public Health, for example, associated moderate tea intake with a reduced risk of cardiovascular events.

Past research has suggested that drinking tea may also have brain benefits, with one **study** linking **green tea** consumption to better working memory....[Read More](#)

Many Talks on End-of-Life Wishes End in Confusion, Study Shows Just 3 out of 10 accurately understood what their loved one wanted



You've filled out a living will, and designated a surrogate to make medical decisions if you're incapacitated.

But, your end-of-life planning may not be done yet.

That's because, according to a new study, your surrogate may still not have a clear idea about what you really want done in a crisis situation -- even after you've discussed your wishes with them.

In the study, seven out of every 10 surrogates didn't have an accurate understanding of their loved one's wishes regarding potentially life-altering medical treatment, even though both believed they had adequately discussed the topic.

"There were a lot of surrogates in those pairs where they both said, 'yes, we've had this communication,' who didn't have a good understanding of the patient's goals of care," said lead researcher Dr. Terri Fried. She is a professor of geriatrics with

the Yale School of Medicine.

The surrogates couldn't accurately say whether their loved one would want treatment even if afterward they would have to live in extreme chronic pain or with severe mental or physical impairments, Fried said.

"Those are the kinds of things that make people say, 'Oh, maybe I don't want to get life-sustaining treatment if that's the way it's going to leave me,'" she explained... [Read More](#)

New Vaccine Recommendation Cuts Number Of HPV Shots Children Need

You'd think that a vaccine that protects people against more than a half-dozen types of cancer would have people lining up to get it. But the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which can prevent roughly 90 percent of all cervical cancers as well as other cancers and sexually transmitted infections caused by the virus, has faced an uphill climb since its introduction more than a decade ago.

Now, with a new dosing schedule that requires fewer shots and a more effective vaccine, clinicians and public health advocates hope they may move the needle on preventing these virus-related cancers.

In December, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices **recommended reducing the number of shots** in the HPV vaccine from three to two for girls and boys between the ages of 9 and 14. The recommendation was based on **clinical trial data** that showed two doses was just as effective as a three-dose regimen for this age group. (Children older than 14 still require three shots.)

The study was conducted using Gardasil 9, a version of the vaccine approved by the Food and Drug Administration in late

2014. It protects against nine types of HPV: seven that are responsible for 90 percent of cervical cancers and two that account for 90 percent of genital warts.



In addition, the new version of Gardasil improved protection against **HPV-related cancers** in the vagina, vulva, penis, anus, rectum and oropharynx — the tongue and tonsil area at the back of the throat... [Read More](#)

Want To Live Past 100? Centenarians Share Secrets Of Knee Bends And Nips Of Scotch



Gertrude Siegel is 101 and hears it all the time. "Everyone says 'I want to be just like you.' I tell them to get in line," she said.

John and Charlotte Henderson, 104 and 102, often field questions from wannabes eager to learn their secrets.

"Living in moderation," he said. "We never overdo anything. Eat well. Sleep well. Don't overdrink. Don't overeat. And

exercise regularly."

Mac Miller, who is 102, has a standard reply.

"People ask me 'What is the secret?' The answer is simple. Choose the right grandparents. They were in their 80s. My mother was 89, and my father was 93," he said.

Genetics and behaviors do play roles in determining why some people live to be 100 or older while others don't, but they aren't guarantees. And now, as increasing numbers are reaching triple digits,

figuring out the mysteries of longevity has taken on new importance among researchers.

Although those 100 and older make up a tiny segment of America's population, **U.S. Census reports** show that centenarian ranks are growing. Between 1980 and 2010, the numbers rose from 32,194 to 53,364, an increase of almost 66 percent. The latest population estimate, released in July 2015, **reflects 76,974 centenarians**... [Read More](#)

Petition Subject: Elimination of the Unfair GPO and WEP Provisions of the Social Security Act to make sure the Congress of the United States enacts legislation, HR.973 & S.1651

ADD
YOUR
NAME

**Get The Message Out:
SIGN THE PETITION!!!!**