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RI ARA

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



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August 17, 2015 E-Newsletter

August 14th RI ARA Birthday Event Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid Statement

On August 14th, the Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans celebrated two very special birthdays, the 80th Birthday of Social Security & 50th Birthday of Medicare & Medicaid at the Johnston Senior Center.

Due to the arrival of Master Sgt. P. Andrew McKenna’s remains at the Quonset Air Station at noon, our Congressional members were not able to attend. They did send staff members to read their statements.

Guest included, from Senator Reed, Brenda Pacheco, from Senator Whitehouse, Vivian Spencer, from Congressman Langevin, Nancy Beattie, from Congressman Cicilline, Rita Murphy, Johnston Mayor, Joseph Polisena, Social Security Metropolitan Affairs Specialist, Catherine, LeBlanc, RI AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer, Maureen Martin & Medicaid recipient, Angelina Angelone and her Mother Michelle.

RI ARA President, John A. Pernorio stated, “Today, we are here to celebrate Social Security’s 80th birthday along with the 50th Birthday of Medicare & Medicaid. This is a joyful day for the seniors of RI & America!

On August 14, 1935, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Social Security into law. Each generation has done its part to maintain its foundations for 80 years. It is the foundation of retirement security in America. Thanks to Social Security’s guaranteed benefits, millions of older Americans are able to enjoy retirement with dignity and financial peace of mind. In this age of growing inequality, shrinking savings, and small or nonexistent pensions, Social Security is more important than ever.

On July 30, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Medicare & Medicaid into law. Medicare has a lot to be proud of too. Thanks to Medicare, millions of older Americans are able to enjoy their retirement without medical expenses that bankrupt them and their families.

Medicaid and CHIP provide free or low-cost health coverage to millions of Americans, including some low-income people, families and children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Retirees and workers should be very concerned over the drastic changes some of our elected officials and 2016 Presidential candidates want to make that would threaten the dream we all have for a safe and secure retirement.

Right now in Washington, some members of Congress are attempting to divide the American people over Social Security – pitting current and future retirees against people with disabilities. We must fight back!

These changes would include cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid – not to just one of these programs, but to all three!

We have some Governors actually refusing federal funds that would expand Medicaid in their states.

And when it comes to Medicare, many want to pass costs onto seniors through benefit cuts, means testing, increasing the Medicare eligibility age, or privatization. Some have even suggested paying for highway repairs by cutting benefits for seniors and the disable.



Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena,
RI ARA Pres., John A. Pernorio,
Social Security Specialist,
Catherine LeBlanc

Today, on this important occasion, we stand committed to strengthening and defending Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid. We believe by having all Americans pay their fair share. As it now stands now, the (FICA) cap is \$118,000, if we raised the cap to \$250,000, we can expand benefits and ensure the financial health of our Social Security system for decades to come.

In these uncertain times, it’s our responsibility to ensure that our Social Security system remains strong and healthy.

We in Rhode Island can be proud of our elected Congressional Members for standing with us to preserve, protect & expand these vital programs for our seniors and future retirees.

We are now the inheritors of these vital programs. That’s why the ARA & RI ARA will continue to stand with them in the fight to preserve, protect, and expand benefits for today’s retirees, for our children, and for our grandchildren”!

The RI ARA thanked Mayor Polisena and the Johnston Senior Center for hosting this celebration. Thanks to all that participated in our August 14th Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid birthday event.



RI ARA President
John A. Pernorio



Rich Fiesta

Today, August 11, 2015, in a published article in the National Journal, Rep. Kevin Brady, (R-TX), chair of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, stated that he as chair intends to overhaul Medicare in 2016 by privatizing it with a voucher (so called "premium support") system, combine the Part A and B deductibles, which we all know is a huge cost shift to beneficiaries beyond the privatization proposal. Just as we have celebrated 50 great years of Medicare this past month, we can never let our guard down as long as the opponents of Medicare have the ability to tear it apart....

Read Below

House GOP Looks Ahead to Huge Medicare Overhaul in 2016

The doc fix is done, Obamacare lives, but the GOP still has health policy plans.

By Dylan Scott

August 10, 2015 For years, Republicans have openly pined for pushing Medicare further into the private sector. But they have been restrained by the practical realities of divided government and the political risks of a plan that Democrats have said would turn the popular insurance program into a voucher system.

Conservatives on Capitol Hill, however, have not surrendered the dream and now are planning to undertake the dirty work to make it a legislative reality. House Republicans will start working next year on drafting a Medicare "premium-support" bill, according to Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Chairman Kevin Brady.

It is the most ambitious item on the upcoming legislative agenda that the Texas Republican laid out in an interview with *National Journal*.

Brady said his panel wants to start the laborious work of creating actual legislative text, likely in preparation for 2017 under a new Congress and president at the earliest. This year's House budget endorsed the policy, as it has for several years under Republican control.

It would follow the first two of Brady's self-described steps to saving Medicare. The first was the "doc fix" deal reforming physician payments, passed this spring. He also hopes to advance in the fall a package of reforms that would, among other things, simplify Medicare hospital payments and introduce pay-for-performance to post-acute care....[Read More](#)

Congressional Republicans Move to Dismantle Medicare

Last week, House Republicans on the Ways and Means Committee **signaled** that they would begin writing legislation to privatize Medicare and turn it into a voucher system. The proposal, spearheaded by Rep. **Kevin Brady** (R-TX), would also combine the Part A and B deductibles, shifting additional costs on to beneficiaries who do not use hospital care. The action could be particularly dangerous should the GOP win the White House and retain control of Congress in 2016.

"Just as we finished celebrating 50 years of Medicare keeping seniors out of poverty, recent events have shown that House Republicans have declared war on Medicare and are committed to tearing apart this important and incredibly successful program," said Alliance Secretary-Treasurer **Ruben Burks**.

Senator Brian Schatz Introduces Legislation to Expand Social Security

Yesterday, U.S. Senator **Brian Schatz** (D-HI) introduced S. 1940, the Safeguarding American Families and Expanding Social Security Act, which would change the cost of living adjustment formula (COLA) to better reflect the needs of older Americans. Current beneficiaries would be expected to see their Social Security benefits increase by an average of \$65 per month. This legislation is fully paid for by lifting the cap on income subject to the Social Security tax (currently at \$118,500) which would also extend the life of the trust fund for decades into the future.

"Sixty-two percent of households aged 55-64 have saved less than one times their annual salary, not nearly enough to sustain a family," said Alliance executive director **Richard Fiesta**. "The Safeguarding American Families and Expanding Social Security Act will increase monthly payments for current retirees, base payments on the real costs seniors face when calculating benefits and make the Social Security system solvent for decades to come. It is one of several bills that the Alliance supports that would expand Social Security benefits."

The Union Veterans Council Has a New Website

The Union Veterans Council recently launched its new [website](#), complete with information on how to become a member as well as resources for current members.

The Union Veterans Council brings union members who are veterans together to speak out on the issues that impact veterans most, especially the need for good jobs and a strong, fully funded and staffed Department of Veterans Affairs. It has been an important ally of the Alliance since its founding.

Study Casts Doubt On Assumptions About Hospital 'Frequent Fliers'

By Michelle Andrews



Super-utilizers are the frequent fliers of the health care system, whose serious illnesses send them to the hospital multiple times every year and cost the system hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. Figuring out how best to address these patients' needs and reduce their financial impact on the health care system is a subject of intense interest among policymakers. Now a new study has found that, in contrast to the notion that "once a super-utilizer, always a super-utilizer," many patients who use health care services intensely do so for a relatively brief period of time.

Research and news reports often point out that super-utilizers are often uninsured or on Medicare and Medicaid and account for a large percentage of health care spending. Federal officials have suggested that their "large numbers of emergency department [ED] visits and hospital admissions ... might have been prevented by relatively inexpensive early interventions and primary care." Many of the programs that have been developed to reduce super-utilizer health care use have focused on the needs of people with multiple chronic conditions, ensuring they have a medical home through which their care is coordinated, for example, or addressing their social services needs....Read More

The Potential of the Aging Mind

Sandra Bond Chapman, Ph.D., Cognitive neuroscientist;

Founder and Chief Director, Center for BrainHealth, University of Texas at Dallas

A persistent myth in our youth-focused culture suggests the process of aging means inevitable, progressive decline. In my field of research, brain health, this myth results in most people believing and allowing their best brain years to be in the past.

Think about it. When do you believe your brain was operating at peak performance?

I frequently ask people this question, and the answer is almost always 10 to 20 years ago - no matter what age they are!

While it is true that many brain processes decline as we age, that is only part of the story. As brain health experts, we are discovering there is more to be celebrated than to be feared. Some brain functions actually improve as we grow older. In fact, as long as no disease is present, the majority of seniors continue to have the capacity to continue to learn new things and make sound decisions.

New research conducted by Joshua Hartshorne at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology shows us different mental processes peak at different ages. For example, the study finds we tend to be best at remembering facts such as names, dates and places in high school. But this processing speed begins to decline quickly at age 18. Similarly, the amount of information we can remember and use at any given time, called working memory, functions best in our mid-20s. But other abilities, such as emotional intelligence and improvement in vocabulary do not peak until decades later.

As The Wall Street Journal notes, the Hartshorne study examined a number of different brain processes that make up intelligence, rather than viewing intelligence as a single measure as has traditionally been done. At the Center for BrainHealth at The University of Texas at Dallas, we, like Hartshorne, feel it is important to examine cognitive health and aging from a broader and more comprehensive perspective.

A few years ago, our BrainHealth team embarked on one of the first-ever studies to examine the link between age, cognitive health and decision-making capacity. Many previous studies had documented a decline in the ability to think logically and solve problems as a person ages. However, these studies had a major weakness: they tended to ignore positive age-related factors such as extensive life experience, reasoning ability and accumulated knowledge that can preserve and even enhance decision-making ability.

Our research, "Healthy Brain, Health Decisions: The MetLife Study of Decision-Making Potential," examined healthy adults in their 50s, 60s and 70s. Encouragingly, we found no decline in decision-making ability in any age group. We also found strategic learning capacity--the ability to sift and know which information is more important to focus on and ignore less important information--may actually increase with age....Read More



1 in 4 Senior Women in U.S. Has Osteoporosis: CDC

About 6 percent of men aged 65 or older also have the bone-thinning condition, report finds.

(HealthDay News) -- The weakening bones of osteoporosis greatly raise a person's odds for dangerous fractures, and a new report finds that one-quarter of all American women aged 65 or older suffer from the condition.

Close to 6 percent of men in this age group also have osteoporosis, according to the report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Experts weren't surprised, and said more must be done to test for and treat the loss of bone density that often comes with age.

Osteoporosis and its precursor condition -- osteopenia (low bone mass) -- "is not just a problem for the 80-year-old individual, but starts to become an issue for many adults in their 50s and 60s," said Dr.

Saad Chaudhary, a spine surgeon at Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital in New York City.

In the study, Anne Looker and Steven Frenk, of the CDC's Division of Health and Nutrition Examination Statistics, examined 2005-2010 data from a major federal government health survey....[Read More](#)



Too Few Heart Attack Patients Get Cardiac Rehab, Study Finds

Home-based programs could provide alternative for those unable or unwilling to travel, researchers suggest

By [Amy Norton](#), HealthDay Reporter

(HealthDay News) -- Cardiac rehabilitation programs are considered a key part of recovering from a heart attack -- but only a small minority of patients ever attend one, a new study finds.

Of the thousands of older Americans who'd suffered a heart attack in the study, only about 62 percent were referred to a cardiac rehab program, researchers found. And just one-third of those patients actually went.

Cardiac rehab programs include supervised exercise, diet counseling, and help with issues such as quitting smoking and managing medications. Guidelines from the American College of Cardiology say that cardiac rehab should be a standard part of heart attack recovery.

Despite that, research has shown that few patients actually attend the programs. The new study, published in this week's *JAMA Internal Medicine*, suggests that the situation is not improving much.

"Participation in cardiac rehab remains disappointingly poor, despite widespread efforts to improve referrals," said Dr. Jacob Doll, the lead researcher on the study and a fellow at the Duke Clinical Research Institute in Durham, N.C.

The problem is clearly not just related to referrals, Doll said, since two-thirds of patients who were referred to cardiac rehab did not go. And even when they did enroll in a program, he added, few attended the full 36 sessions that are typically covered by insurance....[Read More](#)



More Information: The American Heart Association has more on [cardiac rehab](#).

The New England ARA state affiliates are actively pursuing these Petitions.

Petition Subject: Observation Status: "Current Hospital Issues in the Medicare Program"

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

Petition Subject: House Concurrent Resolution 37 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 12 to get power doors installed in Post Offices and other federal buildings.

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

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

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

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