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# RI ARA

*“Fighting for the future of our members,  
NOW, more than ever!!!!”*

*Affiliated with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO*



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RI ARA

## December 23, 2013 E-Newsletter

**Merry Christmas & Healthy & Happy New Year  
To All Our Members**

### Senate Passes Budget Deal

This Tuesday, the Senate voted to end debate on a two-year budget deal and put it up for final passage. On Wednesday, the deal passed the Senate in a 64-36 vote. The bill sets spending levels for 2014 and 2015 and reduces sequester spending cuts by \$63 billion over the next two years.

The agreement heeds our calls against cuts to our Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid; however, it missed a key opportunity to close tax loopholes that corporations and wealthy individuals use to escape paying their fair share of taxes, in many cases any taxes at all. Regrettably, this deal makes new federal employees, hired after December 31 of this year, pay more in pension contributions to the tune of 1.3%. The deal also cuts the annual cost-of-living adjustment for military retirees under 62 years old by 1%. The extension of federal unemployment benefits was not included in the budget agreement; therefore, beginning the week of December 28, millions of unemployed Americans who have exhausted their benefits will receive a notice that their benefits will be stopped. More information on what's in the budget deal here <http://1.usa.gov/1ho7nJg>. “This budget deal is really a mixed blessing. Congress clears the lowest bar in governing our country by passing it, as it avoids another government shutdown; reduces the sequester spending cuts and doesn't touch our Social Security and Medicare programs. However, they missed the opportunity to close corporate loopholes which cost us billions each year and perpetuate the growing income inequality in our country. The budget bill doesn't ask the wealthy and profitable corporations to pay their fair share in taxes and it is partially funded by cuts to federal employees and veterans' pensions,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

### The Affordable Care Act is Working for Millions of Americans, Including Seniors

This Tuesday, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released new stats indicating how the Affordable Care Act has lowered prescription drug costs and expanded access to preventive services. Because of the Affordable Care Act, more than 25 million people covered by traditional Medicare received at least one preventive service at no cost between January and November of this year. This news follows last month's announcement that the health care law saved seniors \$8.9 billion on their prescription drugs since the law's enactment. “Prevention and early detection are very important for our seniors. Some of the deductibles and co-pays do not sound like a lot of money to some, but they did keep mammograms, colonoscopies and other routine tests out of reach for too many seniors on fixed incomes,” said **Barbara Easterling**, President of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Monday, a congressional field hearing in Richardson, Texas regarding the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and alleged problems with local navigators made the news. The Texas Alliance for Retired Americans (TARA) submitted a statement and personal stories for the record, in support of the Affordable Care Act. **Gene Lantz**, TARA President, took aim at congressional naysayers and told a large crowd outside, “It is completely outrageous that certain politicians, for their own political careers, are trying to find chinks in the armor, trying to find some way to turn us all back to the tender mercies of American insurance companies.” TARA member and activist **Morris Fried** shared his gratitude that early provisions of the new health care law allowed his daughter to stay on his health insurance plan during her early 20's. He said, “My daughter will turn twenty-six in April and therefore the full ACA sign-up comes just in time to enable her to obtain coverage on her own, starting then, with no regard to any preexisting conditions. She signed up with no problems and we are thankful for this program.” Local news reporting here: <http://cbsloc.al/18TVQMi>. Other reporting and summary here: <http://bit.ly/1cdOBF9>.

## Happy Holidays from the Alliance

2013 was abuzz with activity. We linked arms on July 2nd across the entire country, protesting the chained CPI benefit cut to Social Security and veterans' programs. On Veterans Day, we teamed up with veterans and a slew of allied organizations against the harmful chained CPI benefit cut. We have a lot to be proud of. You can view a short video highlighting this year's events here <http://youtu.be/j6fzMYZD3W0>.

In our final edition of Friday Alert until January 10, we would like to extend our warmest wishes for the holiday season and thank you for your outstanding activism in 2013. This year, we once again faced strong threats to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. But thanks to the powerful voice of activists across the country, seniors were spared from terribly unjust and painful cuts to these programs in a final budget deal.

Our work is not done. The attack on workers has left wages stagnant and union membership declining – now they're going after our retirement. Pensions and retirement security are most certainly under attack. Politicians, corporations, and even the courts are eroding our retirement benefits, health care and promised benefits that workers paid into throughout their working years. We're seeing it in Detroit, in states advancing legislation to get rid of good pension plans that public employees bargained for in good faith, and in major corporations transferring all the responsibility for a safe retirement onto employees and encouraging them to gamble their retirement in the stock market. Since we refuse to be the last generation to retire, we will redouble our efforts in 2014!

As we head into the 2014 elections, we will need to be as educated and active as we can to protect and strengthen all that we have worked for. Thank you for all you do to help your fellow retirees and the generations that will come after us. We hope to see you in Las Vegas April 28 – May 1 for our convention and look forward to working with you in 2014!

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### **In 2014 Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans along with the other New England Alliance for Retired Americans affiliated chapters will be working on Legislation to improve QUALITY of LIFE**

- ◆ **Petition to Eliminate the Unfair GPO and WEP Provisions of the Social Security Act**  
The Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) penalize people who have dedicated their lives to public service, including many teachers, firefighters and police officers, by taking away benefits they, or their spouses, have **EARNED**.
- ◆ **The New England Alliance for Retired Americans affiliated chapters are working to explore the creation of Legislation Recognizing the need to improve physical access to many federally funded facilities for all people of the United States, particularly people with disabilities.**
- ◆ **Continue to fight against any and all cuts to Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid.**
- ◆ **Continue our support against Privatizing Social Security, increasing Social Security & Medicare eligibility age.**
- ◆ **Keeping our elected officials informed on our positions concerning any Legislation pertaining to our members.**
- ◆ **To continue to provide information that is important to our members thru the RI ARA Weekly E-Newsletter.**
- ◆ **To form stronger regional bonds with the other New England ARA states to create a unified front in support of our members.**
- ◆ **RI ARA will continue to look for support for us from local union leaders and their retirees.**

## For Our Daughters RI Campaign Update



Our campaign (For Our Daughters RI) to combat misogyny and rid John DePetro from the airwaves has gained momentum as over 100 elected officials statewide have signed the pledge not to appear on *any WPRO talk radio programs* until John DePetro has been permanently terminated from employment at WPRO.

Among the list of notables that have signed the petition include U.S. Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse, U.S. Congressmen Jim Langevin and David Cicilline, Governor Lincoln Chafee, Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts, Secretary of State Ralph Mollis, General Treasurer Gina Raimondo, House Speaker Gordon Fox, Senate President M. Teresa Paiva-Weed, Senate Majority Leader Dominick Ruggerio, Providence Mayor Angel Taveras, Gubernatorial candidate Ken Block, potential Gubernatorial candidate Clay Pell, Secretary of State candidates, Guillaume de Ramel, Nellie Gorbea, General Treasurer candidates, Ernie Almonte, Seth Magaziner, Providence Mayoral candidates Michael Solomon, Brett Smiley, and Jorge Elorza along with the Rhode Island Republican Party and the Rhode Island Democratic Party.

For a complete list of elected officials who have made the pledge, please visit <http://www.forourdaughtersri.org/> and feel free to disseminate to your members.

Needless to say, we urge all labor leaders to refrain from calling and/or participating on any WPRO talk radio programs until John DePetro has been rightfully terminated.

SIGN THE PETITION TO  
STOP ATTACKS ON WOMEN

## Petition to Eliminate the Unfair GPO and WEP Provisions of the Social Security Act

The Rhode Island Alliance reminds us that the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) penalize people who have dedicated their lives to public service. Approximately 25% of public service retirees were employed in jurisdictions that do not participate in Social Security. This includes many teachers, firefighters and police officers. For them, Congress considers a portion of their public pension benefit to be Social Security-equivalent. As a result, the Social Security benefits they might get as the spouse of a participating worker, or because they had once worked in Social Security-covered employment, are subject to these two offsets that can severely reduce and even eliminate the Social Security benefit that has been earned. You can sign a MoveOn.org petition urging Congress to enact legislation, H.R. 3118 and S. 896, to repeal the GPO and WEP from the Social Security Act, and further request that President Obama sign the legislation, at the link below.

**If you haven't already done so, PLEASE sign our Petition on the 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 3118 & S 896**

ADD  
YOUR  
NAME

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

## New High Blood Pressure Guidelines Say Seniors 60 Up Do Not Need Treatment Below 150 Over 90

One of three editorials (below news story) in JAMA says it is likely that there will be considerable controversy in hypertension treatment for the foreseeable future; high blood pressure still 140/90



Seniors age 60 and over were given a little more room before being treated for high blood pressure in a new guideline developed by an expert panel and published today in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). They recommend treatment for hypertension at 150-over-90 mm Hg, rather than 140/90, which still remains the defined level for high blood pressure.

People ages 60 and older were focused on in the guidelines because they "are a unique population and we are concerned about the number of medications that may be required," according to a report by [Bloomberg News](#) quoting Paul James, the lead author of the article and chairman of family medicine at the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

Hypertension is the most common condition seen in primary care and leads to heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, and death if not detected early and treated appropriately...[Read More](#)

## Vitamin Supplements a Waste of Money – Ineffective, Sometimes Dangerous!

A key study found daily multivitamin did nothing to slow cognitive decline among senior men 65 and older; another says multivitamins and minerals do not protect against secondary cardiovascular in people age 50 and older

Editorial writers responding to three articles on vitamin and mineral supplementation being published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* urge U.S. adults to stop wasting their money on dietary supplements. The authors cite the large body of accumulated evidence showing that most multivitamin supplements are ineffective, and some may cause harm.

The author's concluded, "B-carotene, vitamin E, and possibly high doses of vitamin A supplements are harmful. Other antioxidants, folic acid and B vitamins, and multivitamin and mineral supplements are ineffective for preventing mortality or morbidity due to major chronic diseases."

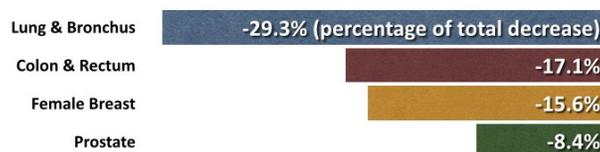
The message is simple, the authors write. Most supplements do not prevent chronic disease or death, their use is not justified, and they should be avoided...[Read More](#)



## Lung Cancer Death Rate Continues Decline, Drives Decrease in Overall Cancer Death Rates

Annual Report to the Nation on status of cancer includes special feature highlighting the contribution of other diseases on survival of patients; declines in colorectal, breast, and prostate cancer death rates help overall decline.

How death rates from four major cancers contributed to the downward trend in U.S. cancer death rates from 2001 to 2010



The Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer, covering the period 1975–2010, showed death rates for lung cancer, which accounts for more than one in four cancer deaths, dropping at a faster pace than in previous years. However, lung cancer remains by far the leading cause of cancer death in both men and women.

The recent larger drop in lung cancer deaths is likely the result of decreased cigarette smoking prevalence over many years, and is now being reflected in mortality trends...[Read More](#)