



© RI ARA 2014
All Rights Reserved

RI ARA

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

Affiliated with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO

December 29, 2014 E-Newsletter



Publication 2014 / Issue 52
Published in house by the
RI ARA

HAPPY NEW YEAR from the RI ARA to ALL!!

Message From RI ARA President, John A. Pernorio Recap of 2014, what were our goals for 2014?

The Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans and the New England Alliance for Retired Americans affiliated chapters worked hard to fight against the attacks on our members. **These were some of the issues:**

- ◆ Legislation recognizing the need to improve physical access to many federally funded facilities for all people of the United States, particularly people with disabilities. **Progress:** An ARA New England Presidents Regional joint Resolution in support of this issue was sent to Congressional members in New England. We are still pursuing it.
- ◆ Repeal of the unfair GPO/WEP. **Progress:** We have received a great deal of support on this issue, however we are still fighting for it's repeal. An ARA New England Presidents Regional Joint Resolution was prepared, submitted and passed at the 2014 ARA Convention. We are still pursuing it.
- ◆ No cuts to needed services for the elderly and disabled. **Progress:** In 2014 we achieved our goal.
- ◆ Continue to fight against any and all cuts to Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid. Fight against Privatizing Social Security, increasing Social Security & Medicare eligibility age. **Progress:** Again, in 2014 we achieved our goal. We celebrated the Birthday's of Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid at the Mancini Center in North Providence, RI with Rich Fiesta, and all of our Congressional Delegation with over 100 seniors.
- ◆ Keeping our elected officials informed on our positions concerning any Legislation pertaining to our members. **Progress:** On any and all Legislation pertaining to our members, letters and contacts information was sent either in support of, or, against.
- ◆ To continue to provide information that is important to our members through the RI ARA Weekly E-Newsletter. **Progress:** Another year of information on related matters, both Congressional and RI ARA HealthLink Wellness. I have 200 E-Mail recipients that receive and distribute it. I also have a monthly article in the Rhode Island Common Ground publication.
- ◆ To form stronger regional bonds with the other New England ARA states to create a unified front in support of our members. **Progress:** This year, the RI ARA hosted two ARA New England Regional Meetings.
- ◆ The RI ARA helped to defeat the 2014 Ballot Question calling for a Constitutional Convention.
- ◆ The RI ARA looked for support from local union leaders and their retirees. **Progress: In spite of our hard work on behalf of all union retirees & seniors, unfortunately on this issue, we made no progress.** Letters were sent to union leaders and the RI AFL-CIO Executive Board members asking for their support. Other than our six affiliated members, **we received none. However, we will continue to fight for them.**

What does 2015 have in store for our members and senior citizens?

- ◆ Continue the fight on the GPO/WEP and improve physical access to many federally funded facilities.
- ◆ Paul Ryan's Way of Cutting Medicare to Reemerge in New Congress. Continue to fight against any and all cuts to Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid.
- ◆ Multi-employer Plans provision to cut pensions that were earned with hard work.
- ◆ Conservative politicians across the country with the help of the American Legislative Council, ALEC, are accelerating their efforts to privatize public services and attack public sector unions.
- ◆ For the third year, to continue to provide information that is important to our members through the RI ARA Weekly E-Newsletter.
- ◆ This summer we will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Medicare. More and this later.
- ◆ Our work is cut out for us in 2015. We will need a strong commitment from our member to **PROTECT & PRESERVE our earned benefits. Together, we can make it happen.**

Seniors' Wait For A Medicare Appeal Is Cut In Half

By Susan Jaffe, KHM



The federal office responsible for appeals for Medicare coverage has cut in half the waiting time for beneficiaries who are requesting a hearing before a judge.

The progress follows an announcement last January that officials were going to work through a crushing backlog by moving beneficiaries to the front of the line and suspending hearings on cases from hospitals, doctors and other providers for at least two years.

The **Office of Medicare Hearings and Appeals** (OMHA) has decided most of the 5,162 cases filed by beneficiaries in the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, plus 1,535 older cases, according to statistics provided to Kaiser Health News.

That's a dramatic change from the year before, when a third of beneficiary cases (1,493) were not decided and nearly half (1,705) of the 2012 cases also were unresolved.

Still, about 900,000 appeals are awaiting decisions, with most filed by hospitals, nursing homes, medical device suppliers and other health care providers, said Jason Green, OMHA's program and policy director. The wait times for health providers' cases have doubled since last year, and are nearly four times longer than the processing time for beneficiary appeals.

Hospitals file more appeals than any other provider. The single largest reason is the increasing number of Medicare payment denials for patients who have been admitted to the hospital but whom auditors later say should have been kept instead for observation care, a status that reduces payments...[Read More](#)

Social Security renews push to collect old overpayments

By Marc Fisher, Washington Post

The Social Security Administration, which said in April it would stop trying to collect debts from the children of people who were allegedly overpaid benefits decades ago, has continued to demand such payments and now defends that practice in court documents.

After the Washington Post reported in April that the Treasury Department had confiscated \$75 million in tax refunds that were due to about 400,000 Americans whose ancestors owed money to Social Security, the agency's acting commissioner, Carolyn Colvin, said efforts to collect on those old debts would cease immediately.

But although some people who had their refunds seized were reimbursed in recent months, some of those same taxpayers have since received new demands from Social Security, asserting that the debts remain and seeking repayment.

In March, the government intercepted Mary Grice's tax refunds from both the IRS and the state of Maryland. It turned out that after Grice's father died in 1960, when she was 4, her mother got survivor benefits for her five children.

Social Security says it overpaid someone in the Grice family — it's not sure who — in 1977. With Grice's mother dead, the government came after Mary to pay the debt.

The Takoma Park, Md., woman, now 58, filed suit against Social Security, challenging the government's right to take her money without notice to satisfy her mother's debt. After the Post wrote about her case, the government returned Grice's tax refunds to her. But then in August, she received a new bill from Social Security, seeking the same \$2,997 that the agency had refunded to her four months earlier: "Did you forget?" the letter said, demanding that Grice "send us the full payment right away."

Four other plaintiffs who joined Grice in her lawsuit also received letters explaining that although the government returned their confiscated tax refunds after the Washington Post's article appeared in April, "this refund does not eliminate your overpayment."

The agency says it has 'broad rule-making authority' to collect debts 'as it sees fit,' without regard to how old a child was when benefits were given to a parent.

Asked to explain the about-face, Social Security officials said they would respond only to written questions. The agency says it has 'broad rule-making authority' to collect debts 'as it sees fit,' without regard to how old a child was when benefits were given to a parent"...[Read More](#)



Possibility for restoring memory found by UCLA study

Memories not stored where many think, may not be destroyed early by Alzheimer's

Most neuroscientists have long believed that memories are stored at the synapses - the connections between brain cells, or neurons - which are destroyed by Alzheimer's disease. A new UCLA study, however, challenges the idea that long-term memory is stored at synapses. This indicates memories may be restored, offering new hope for patients in the early stages of AD.

"Long-term memory is not stored at the synapse," said David Glanzman, a senior author of the study, and a UCLA professor of integrative biology and physiology and of neurobiology.

"That's a radical idea, but that's where the evidence leads. The nervous system appears to be able to regenerate lost synaptic connections. If you can restore the synaptic connections, the memory will come back. It won't be easy, but I believe it's possible."...[Read More](#)

Know Your Brain

The brain and the rest of the nervous system are composed of many different types of cells, but the primary functional unit is a cell called the neuron. All sensations, movements, thoughts, memories, and feelings are the result of signals that pass through neurons. Scientists have learned a great deal about neurons by studying the synapse - the place where a signal passes from the neuron to another cell.



[The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke](#)

Senior's ability to balance on one leg may detect brain health, stroke risk

One-leg standing test is easy way to determine early signs of being at risk for a stroke and cognitive impairment

By Tucker Sutherland, editor, SeniorJournal.com



You know how they warn you on TV when they are about to show something gruesome. We need to use that same type of warning on this report. It is about a new study that finds senior citizens - average age of 67 - that have trouble balancing on one leg for at least 20 seconds may have increased risk of small blood vessel damage in the brain - stroke - and reduced cognitive function.

The research included healthy older people with no clinical symptoms, according to the report in the American Heart Association's journal *Stroke*.

"Our study found that the ability to balance on one leg is an important test for brain health," said Yasuharu Tabara, Ph.D., lead study author and associate professor at the Center for Genomic Medicine at Kyoto University Graduate School of Medicine in Kyoto, Japan.

"Individuals showing poor balance on one leg should receive increased attention, as this may indicate an increased risk for brain disease and cognitive decline."...[Read More](#)

Study points to ibuprofen as possible new anti-aging medicine

Buck Institute study shows popular over-the-counter drug extends lifespan in yeast, worms and flies

Ibuprofen, a common over-the-counter drug used to relieve pain and sold under the brand names of Advil, Motrin and others, could hold the keys to a longer healthier life, according to a study showing that regular doses of ibuprofen extended the lifespan of yeast, worms and fruit flies.

The study was led by researchers at the Buck Institute for Research on Aging in a collaboration with Texas A & M's Agrilife program and published in *PLoS Genetics* on December 18.

"There is a lot to be excited about," said Brian Kennedy, PhD, CEO of the Buck Institute, who said treatments, given at doses comparable to those used in humans, extended lifespan an average of 15 percent in the model organisms. "Not only did all the species live longer, but the treated flies and worms appeared more healthy," he said.

"The research shows that ibuprofen impacts a process not yet implicated in aging, giving us a new way to study and understand the aging process."...[Read More](#)



Seniors keeping teeth longer than ever, tips for keeping it up

Simple, routine dental care matters for senior citizens to save teeth and live healthier



Today, approximately 75 percent of senior citizens over age 65 have kept some or all of their teeth - a record - thanks to better preventive measures like community water fluoridation and daily brushing with fluoride toothpaste, according to the American Dental Association (ADA). The group offers some additional tips for keeping this dental progress going.

They point out that advances in dental care have also allowed dentists to save teeth that would have been lost in the past. But, maintaining a healthy mouth is a life-long goal, even for those who wear dentures, as it helps to prevent other health problems.

It can also be health for the pocket book, since dental care is not covered by Medicare.

An example of the health threat was pointed out in a recent article in the [Journal of Dental Research](#). A study found that very elderly adults (ages 85 and older) in community-living settings who slept in dentures were at a higher risk of developing pneumonia because bacteria from the mouth could be inhaled into the lungs.

The ADA advises all people that bacteria that is allowed to linger in the mouth can cause tooth decay, gum disease and tooth loss, which is why good dental health is important at any age....[Read More](#)

How Much Sleep Do Seniors Need?

By Diana Rodriguez

Many seniors deal with a number of health problems related to aging — one in particular is not getting enough healthy sleep. It's not the advancing of age per se that keeps seniors from a good night's rest, but various sleep disorders or sleep disturbances that often come with age. As we get older, our sleep patterns change and, for starters, seniors do not spend as much time in deep sleep as younger people do.



[Click here for more information.](#)

What's Keeping You Awake at Night?

Biological Issues That Can Cause Sleep Problems

Tips to Help You Fall Asleep

Spanish Friday Alert now Available

The *Friday Alert* will now be available each week in Spanish! To see last week's *Alerta Semanal*, go to <http://tinyurl.com/mq7gpry>. For the Alliance's Spanish language page, which includes fact sheets and other translated documents from the main site, go to <http://tinyurl.com/nllcz6n>. More outreach from the Alliance to the Hispanic elder community will be coming in the next few months.

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

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

ADD
YOUR
NAME

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

Petition Subject: House Concurrent Resolution 67 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 26 to get power doors installed in Post Offices and other federal buildings.

ADD
YOUR
NAME

**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 3118 & S 896

ADD
YOUR
NAME

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