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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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Time to Nip the Next Example of Income Inequality in the Bud *Ending Attacks on Federal Workers' Pensions is a Good Place to Start Restoring the Middle-Class*



With the Budget Conference Committee, set up to resolve differences in House and Senate spending plans, preparing to meet next week, Reps. Jim Bridenstine (R- OK) and Doug Lamborn (R- CO) have proposed increasing federal employees' contribution toward their retirement program from 0.8 percent to 2.0 percent of pay over three years. Their plan would also eliminate the Federal Employee Retirement System Annuity Supplement for new employees and provide a more conservative formula, the chained CPI, for the calculation of inflation-adjusted retirement benefits.

In short, the two are proposing to more than triple what federal employees pay for their pension. This would amount to taking \$20 billion from federal workers.

Congress can and should end the Sequester by capping contractor pay and closing the tax loopholes for big corporations that ship jobs overseas or park hundreds of billions of dollars in foreign bank accounts. Middle income federal employees have already paid their fair share many times over.

Already, the federal workforce has contributed \$114 billion toward deficit reduction and economic recovery - far more than any other group in America has been asked to sacrifice.

Promised pension benefits are being cut across the country. In Michigan, a judge ruled this week that Detroit, as part of its bankruptcy proceedings, can cut monthly pension benefits that have been promised to the city's retirees.

The ruling will allow the city to reduce pensions for retired city workers in spite of protections in the state constitution.

Public-sector union leaders around the country are watching the developments in Detroit closely, as the case could be a bellwether for other municipal bankruptcy cases.

According to Emmanuel Saez, Professor of Economics and Director of the Center for Equitable Growth at the University of California Berkeley, average inflation-adjusted income per family climbed 6% between 2009 and 2012, the first years of the economic recovery. During that period, the top 1% saw their incomes climb 31.4% — or, 95% of the total gain — while the bottom 99% saw growth of 0.4%.

"We cannot have a race to the bottom, where 99% of the population accepts benefit cuts so that the wealthiest 1% can buy an extra yacht," said Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

"Many middle-class retirees in the U.S. are exasperated at the growing income inequality in our country, and economists are searching for ways to address the problem," said Fiesta.

"A good place to start will be rejecting attempts to force federal workers to pay 5.5 percent more for retirement. We need to nip these cuts in the bud now, before income inequality becomes even more severe."

Budget Conference is Close to a Deal that Addresses Sequestration



Senate Budget Committee Chairman **Patty Murray** (D-WA) and House Budget Committee Chairman **Paul Ryan** (R-WI) are only a few billion dollars in budgetary savings away from a deal that would set spending levels and blunt the impact of across-the-board spending cuts for the next two years, according to *Politico* and its sources. The two are the lead negotiators of a budget conference that is charged with setting spending levels - and replacing part of the automatic spending cuts known as the sequester - by December 13. Murray and Ryan are trying to wrap up a budget agreement that would set 2014 discretionary spending levels near \$1 trillion, while replacing the sequester with alternative, targeted spending cuts. Rumors are that the potential deal includes raising revenue by way of hiking fees on airline ticket purchases and other cost increases. It doesn't include revenue from tax



hikes...[Read More](#)

Congress can work together to restore benefits and services by closing corporate tax loopholes and ending tax breaks for the wealthy. Tell your elected officials to reject any cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid as part of the budget deal; pledge now to make a call to tell Congress to end sequestration, close tax loopholes, and raise the revenues needed to protect vital services. See the Alliance's call to action with coalition partners at...[Read More](#)

Alan Simpson Calls Social Security and Medicare Lies

On Tuesday, **Erskine Bowles** and **Alan Simpson** went to Southern Methodist University to discuss the nation's fiscal situation. In 2010, the two had co-chaired the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, and they later co-founded the Campaign to Fix the Debt. Bowles noted that the current budget cuts are "across the board" and mainly in discretionary spending, instead of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, as he believes they should have been. Bowles said the best case scenario in this fiscal climate is to make smarter cuts in military spending and to create a "few fees that Republicans won't call tax increases." Simpson recommended responding to those not wanting to give up their "precious Medicare" or "precious Social Security" by saying that the programs are a "Terminological inexactitude, you lying son of a b****," using the phrase meaning "a lie" coined by Sir **Winston Churchill**...[Read More](#).



"Social Security and Medicare ARE precious," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "I definitely wouldn't refer to them the way that Alan Simpson does."

Conservative Group ALEC Loses Many of its Supporters



On Tuesday, an article in *The Guardian* newspaper released internal documents revealing the conservative American Legislative Exchange Council's (ALEC's) secret corporate influence in statehouses across the country, and showing how supporters are leaving the organization in droves. The influential lobbying network of Republican politicians and big businesses is seeking to avert a looming funding crisis by appealing to major donors that have abandoned it over the past two years, following criticism of its policy on gun laws and positions related to the **Trayvon Martin** shooting.

The *Guardian* reported that ALEC has identified more than 40 lapsed corporate members it wants to attract back into the fold. See the documents and read the story at...[Read More](#)

**Don't forget to 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**



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

DePetro's Words Ring Hollow

For Our Daughters to Accelerate Campaign Against Misogynistic Radio



PROVIDENCE, RI - *For Our Daughters Chair Maureen Martin* issued the following statement this morning after WPRO's John DePetro attempted to deflect attention from the grassroots campaign that has been successfully standing up to his brand of hate radio:

"Rhode Islanders have seen this move before: Mr. DePetro says something wildly inappropriate or offensive, WPRO takes him off the air for a few days, and then he offers an insincere apology in hopes that it will quell the outrage and save his job. That's not going to work this time. We're gaining momentum every minute of every day, and we're not going to stop until Cumulus ends its relationship with this individual whose only substantive contribution to the world has been his immature, reckless and vile degradation of working women.

Every elected Rhode Island leader, Republican and Democrat, has been informed that this campaign is underway - and we have requested that those who currently hold or who are seeking public office refrain from appearing on any WPRO talk show for as long as Mr. DePetro remains on the air.

Our efforts to encourage advertisers, like Alex and Ani, to withdraw their Cumulus buys received a significant boost this week when leaders from the national AFL-CIO, American Federation of Teachers, United Food and Commercial Workers Union, National Education Association and Laborers International Union of North America all enthusiastically agreed to stand up for women and stretch this issue beyond Rhode Island's borders. This is now a national campaign and will touch Cumulus advertisers in multiple media markets.

At its core, this campaign is centered around one very simple premise: It is unacceptable to dehumanize women and call them whores to earn ratings points or advance a political agenda. Mr. DePetro, and those who stand with him, should be on notice that they have picked a fight with the wrong group of women. We are not 'w-h-o-r-e-s,' and we are not going away."

Judge Stops UnitedHealthcare from Dropping Physicians from Medicare Advantage Plan

Judge's order stopping last minute changes by Medicare Advantage plan in Connecticut could have national impact

By Susan Jaffe, Kaiser Health News

In a decision that could have national implications, a federal judge in Connecticut blocked UnitedHealthcare late Thursday from dropping an estimated 2,200 physicians from its Medicare Advantage plan in that state. The Medicare deadline for enrolling in new plans ends tomorrow, leaving little time for seniors to find plans which include their preferred physicians or switch to traditional Medicare.

While the judge's decision affects only the physicians in Fairfield and Hartford Counties who brought suit, several other medical groups are considering filing similar actions. "This is very good news from Connecticut," said Dr. Sam L. Unterricht, president of the Medical Society of the State of New York. "We will definitely seriously consider filing a suit in New York as well."...[Read More](#)



Some HeartStart External Defibrillators Do Not Work Warns FDA in Urging Better Inspection

FDA issues new safety communication on HeartStart automated external defibrillators from Philips Healthcare that were recalled earlier



Certain HeartStart automated external defibrillator (AED) devices made by Philips Medical Systems, a division of Philips Healthcare, may be unable to deliver needed defibrillator shock in a cardiac emergency situation, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said today in a new safety communication for users of these previously recalled devices.

The safety communication includes recommendations to better inspect and monitor the readiness of these devices, as well as steps to follow if someone must use a recalled device in an emergency situation...[Read More](#)

Deaths from Stroke Decline Dramatically in U.S. with Better Prevention, Treatment

Stroke deaths fell 23% in 10 years; ‘One of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th and 21st centuries’



Stroke deaths in the United States have declined dramatically in recent decades due to improved treatment and prevention, according to a scientific statement published in the American Heart Association journal *Stroke*.

According to AHA statistics, the relative rate of stroke deaths fell by 37 percent and the actual number of stroke deaths declined by 23 percent between 1999 and 2009. During the same time, the cardiovascular disease death rate declined by 33 percent.

“The decline in stroke deaths is one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th and 21st centuries,” said Daniel T. Lackland, Dr. P.H., chair of the statement writing committee and professor of epidemiology at the Medical University of South Carolina, in

Charleston, S.C.

“The decline is real, not a statistical fluke or the result of more people dying of lung disease, the third leading cause of death.”

The American Stroke Association commissioned this paper to discuss the reasons that stroke dropped from the third to fourth leading cause of death.

Public health efforts including lowering blood pressure and hypertension control that started in the 1970s have contributed greatly to the change, Lackland said.

Smoking cessation programs, improved control of diabetes and abnormal cholesterol levels, and better, faster treatment have also prevented strokes. Improvement in acute stroke care and treatment is associated with lower death rates...[Read More](#)

Older People Make Mistakes Using Shape, Size, Color to ID Their Drugs

People over 50 who identified blood pressure medication by shape, size or color instead of name had poorer adherence, poorer blood pressure control and an increased risk of hospitalization

By Stephanie Stephens, HBNS Contributing Writer

Older people who identify their blood pressure medications by shape, size and color instead of by name may risk poor blood pressure control and increase their risk of hospitalization, finds a recent study in the *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*.

“Much of our team’s previous research focus has been on people’s ability to take medications safely and to understand how cognitive function affects that,” said lead author Jennifer L. Lenahan, formerly of the Health Literacy and Learning Program in the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University in Chicago.

“We noticed anecdotally in a number of other studies that patients had a lot of trouble identifying their medications.”

Even with proper labeling, many people struggle with organizing and taking medications correctly. Patients may recognize that a pill has a certain look but generic medications frequently change their look, which can be confusing, the authors said.

The researchers interviewed a group of Midwestern safety-net patients over age 50 and with high blood pressure to evaluate their knowledge of drug names and dosages or their pills’ visual characteristics. They also tested their health literacy and asked them about recent hospitalizations or visits to the emergency department.

Specifically, the authors honed in on “identification strategies, self-reported adherence and health outcomes. Patients who were dependent on the visual identification of their prescription medicine reported worse adherence. In addition, they had significantly lower rates of blood pressure control and greater risk of hospitalization,” they wrote.

In general, patients had trouble correctly naming their medications, said Lenahan, and this ability correlated with levels of health literacy. And, not surprisingly, the authors said, “patients who could not identify their medications by either name or appearance were more likely to self-report poorer adherence than were those who could identify their medications.”...[Read More](#)

