

February 15, 2016 E-Newsletter

Alliance Members Join AFL-CIO's Push to Stop Passage of TPP this Week

The AFL-CIO led national "Trade Call-In Days" on Monday and Tuesday this week, and Alliance activists jumped into the effort with both feet.

Virginia Alliance President **Ron Thompson** was in Washington lobbying against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) on Wednesday and Thursday. In visiting every office of the two U.S. Senators and eleven Representatives from Virginia, Mr. Thompson stressed that the TPP means locking in higher prescription drug prices, outsourcing U.S. jobs, and putting corporations before workers and retirees.

Tory Anderson, Executive Director of the Arizona Alliance, focused on her state's congressional delegation. Below, she is pictured with Rep. **Raúl Grijalva**:

"The Alliance effort this week on stopping the TPP was very impressive to say the least," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Thank you to everyone who contacted their Representative and Senators."



Joseph Peters, Jr.

Combatting The Zika Virus

Like many Rhode Islanders, I've been closely following news of the spread of the Zika virus.



As you may know, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Zika virus is now in more than 25 countries, mostly in Central and South America. While the Zika virus is not deadly, it has been associated with severe birth defects, and cases have been reported throughout the United States, including New England. The World Health Organization has declared Zika to be a global health emergency and estimates that up to four million people could be infected with the virus by the end of the year. While the risk in Rhode Island is not believed to be high at this time, it is important that we keep the public informed and provide necessary resources to aggressively address this global health challenge.

Today, as a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, I asked questions of CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden and Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, regarding the Zika virus and other emerging health threats. You may visit my website to [view this hearing](#) and read my press statement on the subject.



Additionally, earlier this month, I sent a letter urging the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to strengthen our public health infrastructure and enhance preparedness and coordination with local health departments that are on the frontlines of diagnosing and preventing the Zika virus. In this letter, I also urged the federal government to prioritize research and development of a vaccine to combat this disease. You can [view this letter here](#). I also joined my colleagues in the Senate in urging the President to take aggressive action to combat the spread of the Zika virus at home and abroad, and to develop an interagency plan to address this emerging threat. You can [read that letter here](#). Please know that I will continue to monitor this situation.

Sincerely, Jack Reed United States Senator

Dear Friend,

As we begin the second session of the 114th Congress, I want to make sure I am continuing to hear directly from the people I serve about what you think is most important for me to be focused on. Our state and our nation face many challenges, but we also have the opportunity to make a meaningful difference when we are all engaged in our democratic process. I hope you will take a moment to share with me what issues matter the most to you.

Click below to tell what issue(s) represent your top priorities for 2016?

[Congressman Cicilline wants to know](#)



America's Retirement System Replaces a Declining Share of Pre-Retirement Income – The Solution: Expand Social Security!

Social
Security
Fairness

In the midst of an American retirement security crisis where current and future retirees must prepare for a sharper drop in their standard of living at retirement than their parents, research by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) shows that Americans are less likely to retire in their 60s than their counterparts in other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 30 percent of 65 – 69 year-olds in the United States (and rising) are employed versus 20 percent of 65 – 69 year olds in OECD countries.

This is largely because in other countries, the retirement system replaces enough income for people to survive decently and maintain their standard of living. Not so in the U.S., where senior poverty is high and our retirement system replaces a lower share of pre-retirement income.

To: All Members of the U.S. Congress

America is facing a looming retirement security crisis. Recent research shows that 30 percent of 65 – 69 year-olds in the United States are employed versus 20 percent of 65 – 69 year olds in other OECD countries, largely because our retirement system replaces a lower share of pre-retirement income than those in other industrialized countries.

**Sign the Petition
Count Me In**

In order to ensure a safe and secure retirement for all and not just the wealthy few, **we call on you to pass legislation that expands Social Security benefits for millions of Americans.**

Are States Obligated To Provide Expensive Hepatitis C Drugs?

By Michael Ollove, Stateline

A handful of federal lawsuits against states that have denied highly effective but costly hepatitis C drugs to Medicaid patients and prisoners could cost states hundreds of millions of dollars.

The drugs boast cure rates of 95 percent or better, compared to 40 percent for previous treatments. But they cost between \$83,000 and \$95,000 for a single course of treatment.

The class actions, all filed in the last eight months in federal courts in Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Pennsylvania, present a series of extremes: a deadly epidemic, a treatment that can stop the disease in its tracks and an enormous price tag.

At least **3.5 million** Americans have hepatitis C, a virus spread through blood-to-blood contact that is usually contracted through the sharing of needles or other equipment to inject drugs. Left untreated, hepatitis C slowly destroys the liver. Medicaid beneficiaries, a low-income population, have a slightly higher rate of hepatitis C infection than the privately insured, and the rate among prisoners is **30 times** higher than in the general population.

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Are too many dying Medicare patients not being visited by hospice staff?

Study looks for hospice visits in last two days if life



A new study raises serious concern about hospice care – or lack of - being delivered to Medicare patients. It finds the dying are less likely to be visited by professional staff in the last two days of life if they were black, dying on a Sunday or receiving their care in a nursing home. Hospice programs do not have any mandated minimum number of required visits for the most common level of hospice care referred to as routine home care (RHC), according to an article published online by *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

A hospice program, however, must deliver the highest possible quality of care for the dying person, and support family members in their role as caregivers with the payments they receive from Medicare.

Joan M. Teno, M.D., M.S., of the University of Washington, Seattle, and coauthors examined Medicare administrative claims data for the federal fiscal year 2014 to look at patterns in visits by hospice professional staff to the dying patient and their family in the final two days of life.

The study included 661,557 Medicare patients and of them, 81,478 or 12.3 percent, received no professional staff visits in the last two days of life, according to the results....**Read More**

Elderly reduce risk of Alzheimer's eating seafood with no worry of mercury

Seafood fights dementia; mercury contamination not related to increased brain pathology



In a study of the brains of deceased elderly people, moderate seafood consumption was associated with less Alzheimer's disease neuropathology, and although seafood consumption was associated with higher brain levels of mercury, the higher mercury levels were not linked to more Alzheimer disease neuropathology.

Numerous studies have found seafood consumption appears to offer some protection from dementia. Dementia is a loss of brain function that occurs with certain diseases. Alzheimer disease (AD) is one form of dementia. It affects memory, thinking, and behavior.

Before this study, however, little has been known about the relationship between seafood consumption and brain neuropathology. It is published in the February 2 issue of *JAMA*.

Neuropathology, according to Wikipedia, is the study of disease of nervous system tissue, usually in the form of either small surgical biopsies or whole autopsies. Neuropathology is a subspecialty of anatomic pathology, neurology, and neurosurgery. It should not be confused with neuropathy, which refers to disorders of the nerves (usually in the peripheral nervous system).

Seafood is a source of mercury, a neurotoxin that is known to impair neurocognitive development. Mercury toxicity is reduced by selenium, an essential nutrient present in seafood...[Read More](#)

Senior doctors expose 'scandal' of pacemaker battery life

Risk of infection associated with battery replacement makes it critical

The battery life of implantable heart monitors must be improved to reduce the need for replacement and the risks this carries for patients, argue two senior doctors in *The BMJ (The British Medical Journal)* today.

Cardiologists John Dean and Neil Sulke say over half of patients with pacemakers will need new batteries and many need several replacements.

Not only is money wasted replacing batteries before they've expired, this "exposes patients to risk of serious complications, including life threatening infection," they warn.

The situation is worse for patients with an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD), they add, since the risks of infection at the time of implant and device replacement are higher than with pacemakers and the batteries have a shorter life (around four to seven years on average).

"The increased risk of infection associated with battery replacement makes it critical that we prolong the life of implantable devices as much as possible," they write.

Yet they point out that the current financial model discourages the development of longer life devices. "With financial disincentives for both manufacturers and purchasers it is hardly surprising that longer life devices do not exist..."[Read More](#)



More seniors at risk of stroke if blood pressure treatment moved up to 150

Older, healthy adults with systolic BP below 140 have lower stroke risk



Raising the level for treatment for high blood pressure for seniors age 60 and older, who are free of chronic kidney disease or diabetes, from a systolic pressure of 140 up to 150 mmHg could put many older people at greater risk of stroke, says new research in the American Heart Association's journal *Hypertension*.

The increased stroke risk is even more pronounced among Hispanics and blacks, the study shows.

In 2014, panel members appointed to the Eighth Joint National Committee, known as the JNC 8, published a paper in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* recommending treatment of high blood pressure in people 60 years and older whose systolic pressure – the top number in a blood pressure reading – was 150. The paper, however, was not an official guideline.

"We started this analysis very soon after (the *JAMA* paper) came out ... because we were concerned about the recommendation's potential effect on stroke prevention," said study author Ralph L. Sacco, M.D., professor and chair of neurology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine...[Read More](#)

Senior citizens who stop driving may face host of health problems, shorter life

Ways to ensure mobility, prevent depression are needed



When senior citizens stop driving their risk of developing symptoms of depression doubles and their physical health is also negatively impacted in a number of ways. All this may lead to faster declines in both physical and mental health, as well as, increased risk of death, according to a new study.

In this study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, researchers reviewed 16 studies that examined the health and well-being of older adults after they stopped driving.

Driving a car is a key factor in independent living and life satisfaction for older adults. In the U.S., driving is considered an important aspect of personal freedom and gives people a sense of control over their lives.

Most adults continue to drive as they age. In the U.S., 81 percent of people aged 65 and older hold a driver's license. However, age-related declines in physical and cognitive functions clearly makes driving more difficult for aging adults, and many people eventually reduce or stop driving altogether.

Several factors are likely responsible for these findings, noted the researchers. For example, after they stop driving, seniors have fewer out-of-home activities, and as a result may have fewer opportunities for social interaction.

"For many older adults, driving is more than a privilege. It is instrumental to their daily living and is a strong indicator of self-control, personal freedom, and independence," noted Guohua Li, MD, DrPH, the senior author of the study, who is a professor of epidemiology and the founding director of the Center for Injury Epidemiology and Prevention at Columbia University.

"It is almost inevitable to face the decision to stop driving during the aging process as cognitive and physical functions decline. When decision time comes, it is important to take into consideration the potential for adverse health consequences of driving cessation and to make personalized plans to maintain mobility and social activities."

Dr. Li notes, however, that simply making alternative transportation available to older adults does not necessarily offset the adverse health effects of driving cessation. Effective programs that can ensure and prolong an older adult's mobility, as well as physical and social functioning, are needed, he suggests.

Organizations supporting issues and services important to senior citizens

The following list of national organizations that serve various needs of senior citizens in the United States was compiled by the Administration on Aging (AoA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is reported on the website for the [Administration for Community Living](#).



National Organizations

This listing presents websites of national organizations that provide information on a variety of issues. Please select from the topics in the link below to learn more:

[Click here to view](#) —> [Comprehensive National Organizations](#)

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 37 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 12 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.973 & S.1651

ADD
YOUR
NAME

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