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RI ARA

*“Fighting for the future of our members,
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Affiliated with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO

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Budget Committee Chairman Tom Price Has Social Security in his Crosshairs



Rep. **Tom Price** (R-GA), the new House Budget Committee chairman, hinted to the Heritage Foundation on Monday that he has big plans for Social Security “reform” in the next two years, according to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and the Talking Points Memo blog. Price mentioned means-testing and increasing the eligibility age as possibilities. He also suggested that privatizing Social Security is a possibility (<http://tinyurl.com/n67l7nf>, <http://tinyurl.com/mqxx6ovp>).

“With Chairman Price’s comments this week, and Senate Majority Leader **Mitch McConnell** hinting at a Grand Bargain last week, there definitely seems to be a House-Senate consensus and a plan to cut Social Security,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance.

Talking Points Memo also posted on Wednesday that “The 80-Year Conservative War on Social Security Is Back for More,” noting that conservatives have virulently opposed Social Security since its inception (<http://tinyurl.com/jw3r7zs>). The post went back to the New Deal Era creation until 1955, when conservatives called for the complete dissolution of Social Security or for its replacement with much less substantive programs. As concerns about solvency grew in the 1980’s, President **Reagan** signed a bill that slowly increased the retirement age while also boosting payroll tax rates, opening the door for later failed privatization efforts by President **George W. Bush**. The conclusion: with a Republican majority now in Congress, it is entirely possible that Social Security could face further attacks.

Senators Send Letter to Leader McConnell Repudiating House Rules Change

On Monday, several Democratic Senators sent a letter to McConnell (R-KY), pressing him to repudiate a rules change by House Republicans that could cut Social Security disability payments by 20%. Last week, the House included language in their new rules for the 114th Congress, making it more difficult to allocate payroll tax revenues to replenish the Social Security Disability Trust Fund, which is due to run out of money in 2016. *The Hill* reported on the Democrats’ letter, which warns that nearly 11 million Americans could see their Social Security benefits cut if Congress does not take action in the next two years. Senate Democratic Whip **Dick Durbin** (IL), Democratic Policy Committee Chairman **Chuck Schumer** (NY) and Finance Committee ranking Democrat **Ron Wyden** (OR) signed the letter, as did Sens. **Patty Murray** (D-WA), **Sherrod Brown** (D-OH), **Debbie Stabenow** (D-MI), and **Bernie Sanders** (I-VT).

“We are deeply concerned that the rule change in the House will impact millions of Social Security beneficiaries,” the Senators wrote. “House Republicans acted according to their extreme ideology and put these benefits at risk by adopting a legislative rule change that creates a point of order against simple bipartisan technical corrections.” More at <http://tinyurl.com/nf9wazr>.

Nancy Altman-Eric Kingson Book Makes a Case for Expanding Social Security Now



Nancy Altman

Nancy Altman and **Eric Kingson**, co-directors of Social Security Works, have written a new book, *Social Security Works!: Why Social Security Isn’t Going Broke and How Expanding It Will Help Us All*. The book explains why the time is right to expand Social Security. Events related to the book are scheduled in Washington, DC for January 21 at Busboys and Poets with Sen. Sanders (<http://tinyurl.com/qjfw3at>) and January 28 at the AFL-CIO with AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer **Liz Shuler** (<http://tinyurl.com/kz32e94>).

The Amazon link for the book is at <http://amzn.to/1uBmbce>.



Eric Kingson

Regional Forums to Provide Ideas for 2015 White House Conference on Aging

Website up and running to share information on updates, events and activities

By *Cecilia Muñoz*, White House Blog



Today, I am delighted to announce the launch of a series of regional forums to engage older Americans, their families, caregivers, advocates, community leaders, and experts on aging on the key issues affecting older Americans. These forums are designed to help provide input and ideas for the upcoming 2015 White House Conference on Aging.

Over the past several months, we have been preparing for the 2015 White House Conference on Aging along with the Conference's Executive Director, Nora Super, by establishing a **Conference website**, and participating in a number of listening sessions and meetings across the country.

This will include regional forums, the first of which will be in Tampa, FL on February 19. Subsequent forums will be held in Phoenix, AZ on March 31; Seattle, WA on April 9; Cleveland, OH on April 27; and Boston, MA on May 28.

Each will allow us to hear directly from the public on issues such as ensuring retirement security, promoting healthy aging, providing long-term services and support, and protecting older Americans from financial exploitation, abuse, and neglect. They will also help us to reach older Americans and their caregivers, advocates, and other stakeholders where they live.

The regional forums are co-sponsored by AARP and being planned in coordination with the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations, a coalition of more than 70 of the nation's leading organizations serving older Americans. While participation is by invitation, all of the events will be live webcast to engage as many people as possible.

This Administration is committed to aging issues, and the 2015 White House Conference on Aging is an opportunity to look ahead to the issues that will help shape the landscape for older Americans for the next decade. We are dedicated to promoting policies that benefit elderly – and ultimately all – Americans.

As we prepare for the 2015 White House Conference, we want your voice to be part of the conversation. Go to our **website** to learn more about the Conference, to sign up for updates on its events and activities, and to tell us your thoughts and stories.

Rand Paul takes on disability claims

By *Steve Benen*

Of all the people Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) could have complained about, he picked people who receive disability benefits?

Actually, yes. At an event in New Hampshire this morning, the unannounced presidential candidate suggested many Americans who rely on disability insurance don't actually deserve it.

"The thing is, in all of these programs there's always somebody who's deserving, but everybody in this room knows somebody who is gaming the system.

"What I tell people is, if you look like me and you hop out of your truck, you shouldn't be getting your disability check. Over half of the people on disability are either anxious or their back hurts. Join the club. Who doesn't get up a little anxious for work every day and their back hurts? Everybody over 40 has a little back pain."

Let's unpack this a bit. First, the Republican senator's statistics appear to be off – as the *Huffington Post* reported, "In its latest annual report, the Social Security Administration says 14 percent of disability beneficiaries suffered 'mood disorders' and 27.7 percent had diseases of the musculoskeletal system or connective tissue, which would include back pain."

But more important is the implicit argument that Americans on disability are committing some degree of fraud, "gaming the system," and receiving benefits they do not deserve.

And on this point, Rand Paul doesn't seem to know what he's talking about....**Read More**

Personal Note:

My son, who is a package car driver for UPS, at age 40 suffered from Avascular Necrosis in his hip which is the death of bone tissue due to a lack of blood supply. Avascular necrosis can lead to tiny breaks in the bone and the bone's eventual collapse. He was out of work for two years, underwent two major surgeries, including a total hip replacement.

He was denied Total Disability twice. After filing two appeals in two years and a hearing, and being back to work for six months, the judge declared him Totally Disabled.

So, Mr. Paul, it's not that easy to get TOTAL DISABILTY, even if you deserve it.



Thromboembolism is Target of New Campaign by Alliance for Aging Research

Educational effort supplies brochures, video,
online quiz to help spread word on dangers of deep vein thrombosis, pulmonary embolism

VENOUS THROMBOEMBOLISM
DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS PULMONARY EMBOLISM

The nonprofit Alliance for Aging Research has launched a new campaign to raise awareness about venous thromboembolism (VTE), the third most common cardiovascular illness, and its associated conditions deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE). VTE affects more than 600,000 Americans, mostly senior citizens.

About the Alliance for Aging Research

The Alliance for Aging Research is the leading nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating the pace of scientific discoveries and their application in order to vastly improve the universal human experience of aging and health. The Alliance was founded in 1986 in Washington, D.C., and has since become a valued advocacy organization and a respected influential voice with policymakers. Visit www.agingresearch.org for more information...[Read More](#)

Older women see blood pressure drop from eating blueberries daily

Artery stiffness and blood pressure reduced more than five percent

Older women should definitely consider consuming a cup of blueberries a day, according to a Florida State study that finds this will lower blood pressure and reduce stiffness of arteries – both linked to cardiovascular disease.

“Our findings suggest that regular consumption of blueberries could potentially delay the progression of prehypertension to hypertension, therefore reducing cardiovascular disease risk,” said Sarah A. Johnson, assistant director of the Center for Advancing Exercise and Nutrition Research on Aging (CAENRA) and postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Nutrition, Food and Exercise Sciences at Florida State University.

Johnson and a team of FSU nutrition and exercise scientists are the authors of a new paper, “Daily blueberry consumption improves blood pressure and arterial stiffness in postmenopausal women with pre- and stage 1-hypertension.”...[Read More](#)



ICU Infections Among Elderly Tied to Higher Death Rates After Discharge



Intravenous line infections and ventilator-related pneumonia among most common problems, study says. Elderly people who develop infections while in an intensive care unit are at increased risk of dying within five years after their hospital stay, a new study finds.

“Any death from preventable infections is one too many,” study senior author Patricia Stone, director of the Center for Health Policy at Columbia University School of Nursing, said in a university news release.

Researchers analyzed data from more than 17,500 Medicare patients admitted to intensive care units (ICUs) in 2002 and found that those who developed an infection while in the ICU were 35 percent more likely to die within five years after hospital discharge.

Overall, almost 60 percent of the patients died within five years. However, the death rate was 75 percent for those who developed bloodstream infections due to an intravenous line placed in a large vein (central line). And, the death rate was 77 percent for those who developed ventilator-associated pneumonia while in the ICU, according to the researchers.

Central line infections and ventilator-associated pneumonia are among the most common types of health care-acquired infections, the study authors noted.

And sometimes, simple measures can prevent these infections. For example, hand washing before handling someone's central line can cut down on infections, as can changing the dressing around a central line any time it gets dirty or wet. Ventilator-related pneumonia can possibly be prevented by keeping the head of the patient's bed elevated so the head is higher than the feet, according to the researchers.

Preventing central line-associated bloodstream infections led to an average of 15.5 more years of life for patients. Preventing ventilator-associated pneumonia resulted in an average of nearly 11 more years of life, the study found...[Read More](#)

More Information:

The National Patient Safety Foundation has more about [preventing infections in the hospital](#).

Most optimistic older adults have the healthiest hearts

People up through age 84 with most positive attitudes twice as likely to have best cardiovascular health



Older people with a positive, upbeat attitude also have significantly better cardiovascular health. And, as the positive attitude scores climbed, so did the health scores in this study that included seniors up to age 85. Those with most optimism were twice as likely to enjoy a healthy heart.

"Individuals with the highest levels of optimism have twice the odds of being in ideal cardiovascular health compared to their more pessimistic counterparts," said lead author Rosalba Hernandez, a professor of social work at the University of Illinois.

"This association remains significant, even after adjusting for socio-demographic characteristics and poor mental health."

Participants' cardiovascular health was assessed using seven metrics:

- blood pressure,
- body mass index,
- fasting plasma glucose and serum cholesterol levels,
- dietary intake,
- physical activity and
- tobacco use.

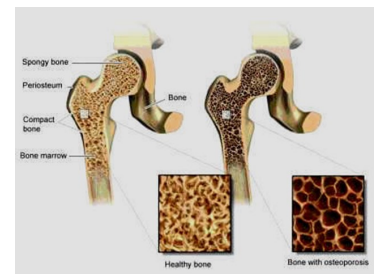
[Read More](#)

Senior women happy with life less likely to suffer osteoporosis

Study focused on the possible effects of depression and other factors on bone health

Women aged 60-70 who are satisfied with their lives have a higher bone density and they suffer less frequently from osteoporosis than their unsatisfied peers, according to a recent study completed at the University of Eastern Finland. The study focused on the possible effects of depression and other factors on bone health.

Osteoporosis is a common disease, which easily leads to bone fracture, and hip fractures in particular can have serious consequences. Bone density gets lower as people age; however, for women, the menopause constitutes a significant risk factor... [Read More](#)



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.

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