

### Rhode Island Proclaims ‘#DStrong Day’ To Honor Boy With Cancer



# #DSTRONG

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — Rhode Island lawmakers are proclaiming “#DSTRONG Day” to honor an 8-year-old boy with terminal cancer whose final wish was to become famous in China.

**Dorian Murray** is scheduled to appear in the statehouse on Wednesday afternoon as lawmakers introduce the General Assembly resolution.

The Westerly boy has a rare and untreatable form of pediatric cancer. Recent tests found cancer cells in his spinal fluid and brain.

The boy told his parents he wanted to be famous in China before going to heaven. His father’s Facebook post describing the wish spread across the globe.

The hashtag #D-STRONG became a trending topic on [social media](#) from the Great Wall of China to his hometown, where thousands poured onto Misquamicut State Beach on Sunday to form a message honoring the boy.

**From the Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans member organizations**  
**Lets see how far we can make this go.**

### Rubio, Kasich Respond to Alliance Questions about Social Security and Medicare Cuts

Alliance activists are engaging the presidential candidates on the stump, and the most recent instances involved Sen. Marco Rubio and Governor John Kasich in New Hampshire.

Sen. Rubio would raise the retirement age for Social Security and privatize Medicare, he told supporters in Henniker, New Hampshire last Friday. Referring to Social Security and Medicare, he said, “We’re not going to disrupt it for the people that are on it now,” but that “Medicare and Social Security is (sic) going to look different for me and for the young people here than it does for our parents.”

That same day, in Claremont, New Hampshire, Sen. Rubio responded to a question from **Jennifer Kenny**, Senior Field Organizer for the New England Region of the Alliance for Retired Americans. At that event he also stated his plans to privatize Medicare.

“Sen. Rubio refers to his own plans for Social Security and Medicare as a “disruption’, but that’s an understatement,” said Alliance President Robert Roach, Jr. “The Alliance would like our leaders to take the country in a very different direction: expand earned Social Security benefits and protect Medicare’s guaranteed benefits from cuts.”

Ms. Kenny questioned Governor Kasich while he was campaigning in New Hampshire on Wednesday.

**Way to go Jennifer Kenny. You are an asset to the New England ARA Presidents.**



### VA chief to Congress: You can’t fire your way to excellence

WASHINGTON — Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald on Thursday disputed claims by members of Congress that his scandal-plagued agency hasn’t dismissed enough employees, saying, “You can’t fire your way to excellence.”

McDonald told the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee that he and other top leaders are turning the VA around, “providing more and better care than ever before” and holding employees accountable, including firing about 2,600 workers since he took office 18 months ago....[Read More](#)



Veterans Affairs Secretary  
Robert McDonald

## Senior citizens not enjoying political debates but still most likely to watch

### Youngest U.S. adults say debates are fun but they don't watch



Senior citizens, those age 65 and older who are in the age group most likely to vote in U.S. elections, say they are not enjoying the debates - at least most of them do. And, they add, they are not "fun to watch," according to Pew Research Center. The youngest adults find them the most fun to watch but, interestingly, report they are the least likely to even watch them.

"As candidates in both parties prepare for the next round of presidential debates, a new national survey finds that the public is highly engaged by the 2016 campaign," according to the analysis of the Pew Research conducted in December.

"Fully 74% of Americans say they have given a lot or some thought to the candidates, higher than the shares saying this at comparable points in the past two presidential campaigns."

The analysis, entitled "**Debates Help Fuel Strong Interest in 2016 Campaign**," adds, however, that "most say the campaign has not focused on important issues."...[Read More](#)

[To the full report at Pew Research Center, including more graphs...](#)

## Supreme Court refuses to hear another Obamacare case

*Richard Wolf, USA TODAY*

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court refused Tuesday to consider yet another challenge to Obamacare.

The justices turned down a challenge from conservatives that contended Congress violated the Constitution when it approved the law in 2010 by sending a bill that raised revenue through the Senate before the House. The Constitution says revenue-raising bills must originate in the House.

A federal appeals court had turned down the petition because, a panel of judges said, the law was predominately a bill to improve health insurance coverage, not a revenue-raising bill. Conservatives on the full appeals court contested that ruling — but they said the legislation actually did originate in the House, so they would have denied the challenge on other grounds.

By refusing to hear the case, a majority of Supreme Court justices either agreed with one or both of those reasons — or they simply have had enough of President Obama's signature health insurance law...[Read More](#)



## Income Inequality is Drastically Affecting Social Security's Solvency



Joseph Peters, Jr.

If nothing changes, Social Security will generate enough revenue to pay for **three-quarters of promised benefits** over the next 75 years. Despite massive income inequality, that is not as ominous as many would have us believe. However, a recent Atlantic magazine **column** by Dr. Teresa Ghilarducci, a professor of economic policy analysis at the New School for Social Research in New York, suggests we could do better. Dr. Ghilarducci writes that the formula for funding Social Security was calibrated when our country had much less inequality than it currently has. Since 1979, the wages of the top 1% of workers have grown 138%, while the wages for the bottom 90% grew only 15%.

This statistic has significant implications for Social Security, since taxing all of that income growth evenly would leave Social Security with no shortfall at all.

Any dollar that an American earns beyond \$118,500 is not currently subject to Social Security taxes. Someone who makes \$118,500 this year is going to pay the same amount in Social Security taxes as someone who makes millions more than that – and much more, as a percentage of their salary.

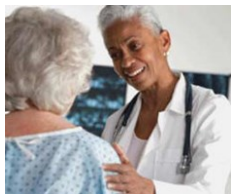
To address this unfairness, the Alliance supports the Safeguarding American Families and Expanding Social Security Act, S. 1940, which was introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI). This legislation would change the cost of living adjustment formula (COLA) to better reflect the needs of older Americans. Current beneficiaries would be expected to see their Social Security benefits increase by an average of \$65 per month.

But that's not all this bill would do. This legislation would address income inequality by lifting the cap on income subject to the Social Security tax (currently at \$118,500), so it would also extend the life of the trust fund for decades into the future. **Other bills** would also expand earned Social Security benefits by scrapping the cap.

"Billionaires are not paying the same share into Social Security as those on the bottom rungs of the economic ladder," said Joseph Peters, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "The Schatz bill would correct that."

## Outpatient thyroid surgery safe for even super-elderly with standardized approach

### Readmission rates for the elderly in 70s & 80s were lower than the younger control groups



A standardized treatment approach that starts with good screening and ends with patients going home to well-prepared caregivers, means outpatient thyroid surgery is safe for the vast majority of patients, including the elderly and super-elderly, physician-scientists say.

One study looked at 1,311 thyroidectomy procedures - including 1,026 outpatient cases - from May 2006 to November 2013, by a single surgeon at an academic medical center. It found that while the percentage - 59.7 to 92.3 percent - and complexity of the cases performed on an outpatient basis climbed steadily over the years, the readmission rates for outpatients was less than one percent.

A subsequent evaluation in which the same researchers compared results in older and younger patients found that the same methodical approach makes outpatient thyroid surgery a safe option for even their oldest patients. That study looked at a control group of 328 patients a mean age of 33, 201 patients a mean age of 70 and 16 patients an average age of nearly 83.

"We have continued to refine our approach, evolving from one in which patients were kept in the hospital just under 24 hours to sending a handful of patients home right after surgery," said Dr. David J. Terris, otolaryngologist at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University and surgical director of the university's Thyroid Center.

"The process has been tweaked, and we are slowly growing the outpatient numbers. We have looked at things like how we manage the medicines, especially the calcium supplements, and how we manage the instructions we give caregivers," Terris added. "Now, we've said: We are comfortable with this. And patients love it." ...[Read More](#)

## Mentally challenging activities key to healthy aging mind for seniors

### Study confirms the adage about cognitive aging of "Use it or lose it."

Researchers claim to have the first experimental evidence that mentally-challenging leisure activities can actually change brain function and that it is possible that such interventions can restore levels of brain activity to a more youth-like state. Interestingly, the older the individuals that entered into the program, the greater the brain changes.

The findings provide initial experimental support that engaging in challenging tasks for a sustained period of time increases neural efficiency in brain regions associated with attention and semantic processing, potentially enduring for relatively prolonged periods.

"Although there is much more to be learned," the researchers say. "We are cautiously optimistic with respect to the possibility that age-related cognitive declines can be slowed or even partially restored if individuals are exposed to sustained, mentally challenging experiences."

One of the greatest challenges associated with the growing numbers of aged adults is how to maintain a healthy aging mind. Taking up a new mental challenge such as digital photography or quilting may help maintain cognitive vitality, say researchers reporting in Restorative Neurology and Neuroscience.

Recent evidence suggests that engaging in enjoyable and enriching lifestyle activities may be associated with maintaining cognitive vitality. However, the underlying mechanism accounting for cognitive enhancement effects have been poorly understood.

All of the participants underwent a battery of cognitive tests and brain scans using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), an MRI technology that measures brain activity by detecting changes associated with blood flow. Participants were randomly assigned to the high-challenge, low-challenge, or placebo groups.

- ◆ The **high-challenge** group spent at least 15 hours per week for 14 weeks learning progressively more difficult skills in digital photography, quilting, or a combination of both.
- ◆ The **low-challenge** group met for 15 hours per week to socialize and engage in activities related to subjects such as travel and cooking with no active learning component.
- ◆ The **placebo** group engaged in low-demand cognitive tasks such as listening to music, playing simple games, or watching classic movies.

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## Millions of elderly flock to U.S. emergency rooms due to infectious diseases

Seniors more likely to visit ER due to infectious disease than heart attack, heart failure combined



Investigators estimate that during 2012, there were more than 3.1 million emergency department visits for infectious diseases among senior citizens in the U.S. and 4 percent died there are in hospital.

This accounted for 13.5% of all emergency department visits of elderly adults, which was higher than visits for heart attacks and congestive heart failure combined.

The rate of infectious disease-related emergency department visits was 7,231 per 100,000 elderly adults. The most common diagnoses were lower respiratory infections, urinary tract infections, and septicemia.

Septicemia is bacteria in the blood (bacteremia) that often occurs with severe infections. Septicemia is a serious, life-threatening infection that gets worse very quickly. It is also called just sepsis and occasionally referred to as blood poisoning. (More information at MedlinePlus.)

“Sepsis is caused by an immune response triggered by an infection,” according to Wikipedia. “The infection is most commonly by bacteria, but can also be by fungi, viruses, or parasites.”

“Common locations for the primary infection include: lungs, brain, urinary tract, skin, and abdominal organs.

“Risk factors include young or old age, a weakened immune system from conditions such as cancer or diabetes, and major trauma or burns.”

Of all infectious disease-related emergency department visits, 57.2% resulted in hospitalization.

Overall, 4.0% of patients died during their emergency department visit or hospitalization.

“With the rapid growth of the elderly population in the U.S., infectious diseases continue to be an important social problem. Our findings call for strategies to reduce infectious disease-related morbidity and healthcare utilization as a national priority for research, health policy, and community action,” said Dr. Tadahiro Goto, lead author of the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society study.

## Older women with strong legs have strong brains, too

Study of twins age 43-73 over 10 years

by Ken Bowen

A gold-standard study from Kings College, London, notably extends the many previous studies linking physical exercise with improved cognitive aging.

The study utilized 324 pairs of healthy female twins (average age at study start was 55 with a range of 43-73), and extended for 10 years, with a subset of identical twins followed up at 12 years.

Since the thigh muscle is the largest muscle in the human body, the power it could develop was taken as a proxy for the overall muscular fitness of the body.

The study found a striking relationship between leg power (representing overall fitness) and both 10-year cognitive change and total grey matter...[Read More](#)



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

**Petition Subject: Observation Status: “Current Hospital Issues in the Medicare Program”**

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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.**

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