

Hundreds of Alliance Members Converge on Washington for 2015 National Legislative Conference



L-R
Michael Connelly /
Roger Boudreau

400 activists came to Washington, DC for the Alliance’s 2015 National Legislative Conference this week. The activists reached more than 150 offices on Thursday’s Lobby Day, when they met with their Members of Congress and Senators and voiced their concerns about retiree issues. Alliance members lobbied their elected officials with very specific goals in mind, including: expand earned Social Security benefits; protect Social Security Disability Insurance; preserve Medicare and allow no cuts to it; and oppose the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Trade Agreement. The first **photographs** are up on Facebook!



“A core part of being a lifelong activist is a commitment to lifelong learning. We are never too old to stop learning new skills,” said Alliance President **Barbara J. Easterling** of the conference’s mission.

Richard Trumka, President of the AFL-CIO, began the conference with a fiery speech on Tuesday. Several elected officials addressed the attendees: House Democratic Leader **Nancy Pelosi** (CA), Senators **Bernie Sanders** (VT), **Debbie Stabenow** (MI), and **Elizabeth Warren** (MA) and Representatives **Keith Ellison** (MN) and **Ruben Gallego** (AZ). On Wednesday evening, the President’s Award was presented to **Judy Cato**, Executive Vice-President Emerita, for her activism and years on the Alliance Executive Board.



Max Fine, a member of President **Kennedy’s** White House Task Force on Medicare in the 1960’s, told the crowd what it was like to work on creating Medicare with both **JFK** and President **Lyndon Baines Johnson**. Several other speakers, including **Mark Dimondstein**, President of the American Postal Workers Union; **Will Fischer**, Executive Director of the Union Veterans Council; and many others brought enormous energy to the week’s events.

The Alliance offered eleven different action sessions throughout the conference, including **TPP: Latest update and What We Do Next and Politics and Advocacy in Action**.

“Now, we must go home and educate our neighbors on how strengthening and expanding Social Security would improve benefits for millions of Americans and ensure the stability of the program for years to come,” said **Jo Etta Brown**, Alliance Executive Vice President for Community Advocacy in her concluding remarks.

The Alliance for Retired Americans will livestream the July 13 White House Conference On Aging event on the WHCOA’s [website](#)

In the article below that ran in the June 29th RI ARA E-Newsletter, Senator Jack Reed, [D-RI] also was an original sponsor. Thank You!!!!

From ssfairness: The New Senate Repeal Bill – S.1651



Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) has introduced a new bill, S.1651, that would repeal both the GPO and the WEP. This bill will be a companion to Rodney Davis’ House bill, HR 973. We are delighted to see this! We have been waiting for this bill for months. We want to thank him and the other 11 Senators who have signed on as original sponsors.

They are: Sen. Whitehouse, Sheldon [D-RI], Warren, Elizabeth [D-MA], Sen. Collins, Susan M. [R-ME], Sen. Blumenthal, Richard [D-CT], Sen. Vitter, David [R-LA], Sen. Hirono, Mazie K. [D-HI], Sen. Franken, Al [D-MN], Sen. Heller, Dean [R-NV], Sen. Murkowski, Lisa [R-AK], Sen. Baldwin, Tammy [D-WI] & Sen. Udall, Tom [D-NM].

Important Information About Social Security Benefits

Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA):

Based on the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W) from the third quarter of 2013 through the third quarter of 2014, Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries will receive a 1.7 percent COLA for 2015. Other important 2015 Social Security information is as follows: <http://www.ssa.gov/news/press/factsheets/colafacts2015.html>

Facts And Figures, click on links below.:

[Social Security Basic Facts \(Aquí en Español\)](#)

[Fast Facts & Figures About Social Security](#)

[Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income Statistical Snapshot](#)

[Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\) Monthly Statistics](#)

[Fact Sheets on the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program](#)

[Program Highlights](#)

[How is Social Security financed?](#)

[What are the Trust Funds?](#)

[Demographic Group Fact Sheets](#)

[Disability Benefits Fact Sheets](#)

[Geographic Statistics Fact Sheets](#)

[Retirement Benefits Fact Sheets](#)

[SSI Benefits Fact Sheet](#)



Save the Date, August 14, 2015
The **RI ARA** will **Celebrate** two great events,
Social Security's 80th Birthday
The Social Security Act was signed into law
on August 14, 1935 by President Roosevelt



Medicare & Medicaid's 50th Birthday
The Medicare & Medicaid programs were
signed into law on July 30, 1965
By President Lyndon B. Johnson

At the Johnston Senior Center
1291 Hartford Avenue
Johnston, RI 02919
11:30 am to 12:30 pm

**Come help us celebrate these historic events with
Members of the Rhode Island Congressional Delegation**

**RI Department of Elderly Affairs Director
Charles Fogarty**

**Social Security Administration
Metropolitan Public Affairs Specialist
Catherine LeBlanc**

**Johnston RI Mayor
Joseph Polisena**

We will serve Coffee & Birthday Cake

Door Prizes: 10 / \$10 CVS Gift Cards



Patrick Kennedy On Moving Mental Health Policy Out Of ‘The Dark Ages’

By Alana Pockros



Former Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., was a senior in high school the first time he checked into rehab. His struggle with drug addiction and bipolar disorder continued to haunt him through his 16 years in Congress. But his first-hand experience with these illnesses also drives his long-standing interest in shaping public policies to confront the challenges faced by people with mental health problems.

One of Kennedy’s greatest legislative achievements is spearheading the passage — with the help of his father, the late Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass. — of the landmark Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008.

Former Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) speaks at a press conference on Capitol Hill regarding a “national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illness in jails in May in Washington. (Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images)

Since choosing to leave Capitol Hill in 2010, he has pushed to bring mental health policy out of what he says is “the dark ages” — using the advantages, he says, of coming “from a famous family with a powerful, nationally recognized name. [It] gives me a convening power.”

These days, he is most visible in his role as founder of The Kennedy Forum, an advocacy coalition for the mentally ill and mental health policy, and co-founder of the nonprofit research organization called One Mind.

“One Mind’s mission,” he says, “is to accelerate [mental health] cures and therapy by ensuring that we don’t duplicate science.” To this end, he adds, “we have already ... created the largest platform to study traumatic brain injury and PTSD in the world,” bringing other countries into the effort.

Testifying last month before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, he said the pending Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015 would provide resources and programs for psychiatric care. “The time is now” for reform, he said, questioning why “with mental illness and addiction we wait for crisis” instead of intervening early.

KHN reporter Alana Pockros talked with Kennedy about problems he sees in the nation’s mental health system and the steps needed to fix them. The following interview has been edited and condensed... [Read Full Story](#)

Learning About Hospice Should Begin Long Before You Are Sick

By Caroline E. Mayer



As a consultant who counsels families on end-of-life care management, Johanna Turner often shares the story of her mother’s final days 21 years ago. Thanks to the skilled and loving care provided by a local hospice, Turner was able to keep her promise to let her mother die in their Oakton, Va., home.

“She had the best of care for five months,” says Turner, a District resident. “A hospice licensed practical nurse came first thing in the morning to help change complex dressings, a primary nurse visited several times a week, there was an on-call nurse to help address pain-control questions in the middle of the night, plus a social worker and a chaplain. It took all of us to get through those weeks.”

Still, Turner tells families, she had to bear much of the caregiving, even taking a leave of absence from her job. “I treasured that time, but it was physically and emotionally exhausting. Hospice made it doable, but the truth is, it was still a lot of hard work.”

Some families, she says, may not be able to bear that burden, certainly not without hiring extra help. But, she says, “the hospice gave me the skills and confidence to do what I wanted so badly to do for my mother. I will always be grateful.”

Introduced to the United States in the 1970s, hospice care is becoming an increasingly common treatment. Last year, 1.65 million people received hospice care, up from just more than 1 million in 2004, according to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. In addition, there were more than 5,500 programs in the U.S. last year, compared to 3,100 in 2000.... [Read More](#)

Aging in Community: Being a caregiver doesn't have to be hard

By Pam Tillett, Orange County Department on Aging



Being a caregiver has taught me how important it is to develop an emotionally supportive environment so I have someone to share the heartache and joys. Accepting support from others is a gift. You cannot do this alone. The biggest barrier to getting help is to finding just the help you need. Start small, plan for one day at a time.

Caregiving can be a source of joy, love, and a real gift to the person to whom you are providing care. It can also take all the strength and patience you have, leaving you exhausted and isolated. Many find it harder than they ever imagined, yet more rewarding than they initially thought. Accepting support from others and building a support network is the key to dealing with the negatives and appreciating the positives.

Alone, caregiving can be an exhausting job but the good news is that there is help available through Orange County Department on Aging. The staff is knowledgeable and understanding, and they are dedicated to helping you find the resources and support you need.

In addition to being a caregiver, I am the social worker on staff at Orange County Department on Aging, specializing in dementia and caregiver support. Therefore, much of my day is focused on helping caregivers learn strategies for coping with their responsibilities and where to find external supports when needed. ...[Read More](#)

Want A Good Laugh? Head To The Hospital

By [Susan Jaffe](#)

Every month, a group of older adults goes to Washington, D.C.'s Sibley Memorial Hospital, but they don't see a doctor or get tests. They're not sick. They come just for laughs.

They gather in a room next to the hospital cafeteria for the "Laugh Cafe," one of the activities offered to local seniors, including the 7,300 members of Sibley's Senior Association. The price of admission is one joke, recited out loud. Experts say laughing can be good for your health, and everyone in the room strongly agrees.

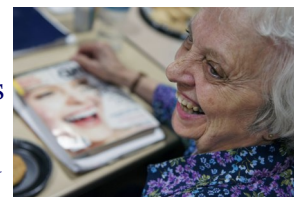
"Absolutely, it's the best medicine," said Joanne Philleo, 79, from Bethesda, Md.

"I like to come with Joanne, and I love the jokes," said Jean Altimont, 89. "I never dreamed of telling a joke in front of a group, and the first time I came, I was real nervous."

Some jokes took a few twists before getting to the punchline, a few were almost R-rated, others were one-liners: My husband wanted more space, so I left him outside. I sold my vacuum because it was gathering dust. Why do men like smart women? Because opposites attract.

And if one had been told before, no one cared.

The association for those age 50 or older also offers other activities, including French and Italian conversation classes, day trips to museums, a current events group, and...[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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**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.

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**Get The Message Out:
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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

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SIGN THE PETITION!!!!**