



In Temporary Victory for Seniors, Bad Trade Deal Fails to Advance in House



Rich Fiesta

The U.S. House of Representatives failed to advance a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Fast Track authority legislative package on Friday, handing retirees a temporary victory by a vote of 126-302. President **Barack Obama's** bid for fast-track trade authority had narrowly cleared a procedural hurdle on Thursday, after a handful of House Democrats joined with pro-trade House Republicans despite provisions harmful to seniors, 217-212.

“Today’s votes in the U.S. House showed that cuts to Medicare are not a viable way to pay for trade legislation,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance in a **statement**. “Members of the Alliance worked tirelessly to educate members about this proposal and made their views heard – visiting, phoning and writing their elected officials. Today’s vote sent a strong signal and that is a victory for retirees.”

On Monday, Mr. Fiesta hosted a telepress call about the trade deal with Reps. **Doris Matsui** (D-CA) and **Jan Schakowsky** (D-IL), co-chairs of the Congressional Task Force on Seniors and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare. Mr. Fiesta urged members of the U.S. House to oppose plans to cut a total of \$950 million from Medicare to fund the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program to assist workers displaced by trade – a key sticking point in the larger controversial debate over whether the House should provide fast track authority for trade deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

The Alliance sent a **letter** to all members of the U.S House on Thursday opposing Medicare cuts to pay for TAA and was one of 2,000 groups that signed another letter against fast-track from the Citizens Trade Campaign to House members and Senators. Alliance chapters also held impassioned rallies outside congressional offices in Texas, North Carolina, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Washington and Maryland to urge members of Congress to protect Medicare benefits from cuts under TAA.

“I am all for funding TAA, but not through cuts to Medicare,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Medicare is not a piggy bank. It is a dangerous precedent to use cuts to Medicare to pay for other, non-health related needs.” **Read statements from RI Congressmen Langevin & Cicilline about TPP/TAA on next page.**

So you think AARP Supports Seniors? AARP staying out of fast-track debate

The AARP has serious concerns about a pending trade pact sought by the Obama administration, but the political heavyweight is not joining the liberal effort to kill “fast-track” legislation that many believe will play a decisive role in the deal’s fate.

With the House heading toward an intensely competitive vote on trade legislation, the AARP, which represents millions of retired Americans — and is one of the nation’s most potent voting blocs — is not looking to pick a fight over legislation granting President Obama trade promotion authority (TPA), seen by many as critical to the final agreement.

The group has been vocal about its worries that the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) could lead to higher prescription drug prices, a major concern for its members.

The AARP says it has been airing its qualms about the deal since 2013, and has signed on to letters and participated in press conferences on the matter. But by focusing the bulk of its efforts on the actual trade terms, as opposed to the legislation necessary to get that deal finalized, the group is steering clear of one of the most contentious fights of this Congress.

“We have focused on educating members on these issues from the consumer perspective instead of engaging in the overall fast-track debate,” said Greg Phillips, an AARP spokesman. “While we have some concerns with the trade objective provisions related to IP [intellectual property] standards and prescription drug reimbursement in the TPA, AARP has been focused on prescription drug access issues with the TPP.”

The hands-off approach runs counter to that of many other groups that have gripes about the trade pact. Labor unions are throwing everything they have against the deal, launching ad campaigns in the home districts of Democratic lawmakers who support the fast-track legislation, as well as openly discussing primary challenges to Democrats who vote in favor of the legislation.

Over the weekend, the AFL-CIO posted a Craigslist ad in the Sacramento home district of Rep. Ami Bera (D-Calif.), a TPA supporter. The wanted ad was seeking a “Congressman w/Backbone” with a start date of January 2017....**Read More**

RI ARA: LET AARP KNOW YOU DON'T SUPPORT THEIR POSITION ON TPP/TAA



Washington, D.C. - Congressman Jim Langevin (D-RI) issued the following statement in response to the introduction of legislation that would give the administration fast-track authority to negotiate the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement:

"The United States has been working with TPP negotiating partners for more than three years. This agreement could greatly shift global trading patterns and accordingly deserves the highest level of scrutiny to ensure it does not displace U.S. jobs or undermine our country's competitiveness. While I favor expanding global trade, it is important that any free trade agreement places American workers and companies on an enforceable level playing field with foreign trading partners when it comes to labor rights, environmental regulation, intellectual property protection and other critical issues. For that reason, I am opposed to passing Trade Promotion Authority legislation with respect to the TPP.

"Congress has the responsibility to set trade policy, and 'fast track' procedures largely circumvent this important review. There is a better way to make decisions of this magnitude that significantly impact America's place in the global economy, and that must include robust debate and discussion from all partners, including Congress. I will continue to work to ensure that trade agreements protect American workers and consumers and do not undermine America's ability to compete in the global market."

WASHINGTON – U.S. Congressman David N. Cicilline (D-RI), the sponsor of the Make it in America Manufacturing Act and a vice chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, issued the following statement today after the House voted not to send Fast Track legislation to President Obama:



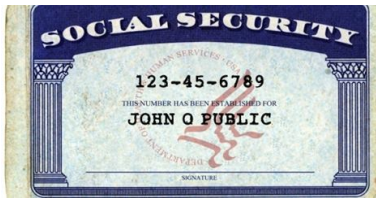
"Make no mistake, this is a significant victory for working men and women. Today's vote puts the brakes on Fast Track and makes sure Congress, and the American people who sent us here, have a seat at the table when negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership. As it is currently written, the Trans-Pacific Partnership fails to address currency manipulation, doesn't include enforceable provisions on the environment and labor rights, and rewards countries with horrific human rights records."

"For decades, Rhode Island workers have seen the consequences of bad trade deals that ship American jobs overseas. Our state has lost 40,000 jobs since NAFTA, most of which were in manufacturing. I've met with textile workers in the mills in Woonsocket and the shipbuilders in Bristol who don't understand why Congress would consider another trade deal that eliminates more American jobs."

"What we need in this country is fair trade, not just free trade. I am proud to stand with American workers against TPA."

The RI ARA members thank our Congressmen for their continued SUPPORT

Why Social Security's Advice Is Often Wrong



Social Security advice is always well-intentioned, usually helpful—and often wrong. That was one of the most eye-opening findings of doing two years of research on *Get What's Yours*, the recent book on Social Security that I co-authored.

In trying to provide advice that is easily understood and applies to most people, the agency often glosses over complex program rules and claiming scenarios. Unfortunately, if people make bad claiming decisions as a result, they are the ones who pay the price, not

some representative at a Social Security office or on the other end of the phone line in a huge call center.

Most recently, I came across [this online advice](#) in the frequently asked questions section of the Social Security website:

"How far in advance can I apply for Social Security retirement benefits?"

"You can apply for Social Security retirement benefits when you are at least 61 years and 9 months of age.

"You should apply three months before you want your benefits to start.

"Even if you are not ready to retire, you still should sign up for Medicare three months before your 65th birthday."

On first glance, what could be wrong with these statements? After all, the earliest age at which retirement benefits begin is 62. So coming in three months earlier makes sense, right? And every Baby Boomer has known for a long time that Medicare, the federal health insurance program, begins at age 65. So what could be wrong with reminding people to sign up when they turn 65?...[Read More](#)

Statins probably do not cause memory loss says giant study

Statins have proven very effective at lowering high cholesterol and you should stick with them



Previous studies – mostly limited research – have indicated memory lapses resulting after taking statins. Whoa, that may not be the case, says new research involving about a million patients. These researchers suggest you stick with your statins.

Cholesterol-lowering statin drugs most likely do not cause short-term memory loss, according to this Rutgers University and University of Pennsylvania study.

Limited previous studies and some statin-drug takers have anecdotally reported memory lapses after taking popular lipid-lowering drugs (LLDs) called statins, said Brian L. Strom, chancellor of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) and lead study author. The result has been that some people have stopped taking their statins, inappropriately, Strom said.

About 610,000 people die of heart disease in the United States every year - that's 1 in every 4 deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control. One in four Americans over age 45 take statins, drugs that inhibit a liver enzyme that controls the synthesis of cholesterol and lowers LDL, commonly known as "bad cholesterol."

Statins have proven very effective at lowering high cholesterol, one of the major risk factors for heart disease, and preventing heart attacks and deaths. If a statin drug alone is not effectively reducing cholesterol numbers or a patient doesn't tolerate the drug, nonstatins are often prescribed, Strom said.

The study, published today in *The Journal of the American Medical Association-Internal Medicine*, compared new users of statins with people not taking statins. New statin users also were compared to a second control group - patients taking nonstatin LLDs - which had not been done before... [Read More](#)

Tablets can help senior citizens cross the 'digital divide'

**They make it easier for older people to get online,
breaking down barriers that kept them from getting connected**

Too often, senior citizens are introduced to the digital world through a computer or tiny hand-held phone. And, too often, they find the challenge too much for their resolve. There is an easier way, according to new research, and it's called a tablet.

Those smaller, lighter, easy-to-use computers that seem to be taking the place of laptops, appear to be a way to help the elderly cross what's known as the "digital divide."

New Michigan State University research has found that the use of tablets does make it easier, breaking down some of the barriers that keep seniors from getting connected.

In addition to being smaller, lighter and more portable, tablets allow people to maneuver online without having to move and click a mouse.

"The dexterity required to control a mouse is really hard for some older adults," said Shelia Cotten, an MSU professor of media and information who led the research.

"A certain level of muscle control is needed. And some older adults have shaking issues, in addition to muscle-control issues in their hands and arms."

Cotten also said that in most cases, tablets are just easier to use, especially for people who don't have a lot of computer experience.

"For the most part they are pretty easy to operate," she said. "You don't have to click on 12 different things to do what you want to do. It helps to ease their tech anxiety."

The researchers also found that when an elderly person's family recommended a certain type of tablet and helped them learn how to use it, that contributed to their computer-use confidence as well. They learned how to use tablets by watching others use them and also by playing around on the tablets themselves.

It's a fact that getting online can help the elderly feel more connected to family and friends, as well as providing them with useful information.

"For example, it allows them to be more proactive in their health care," Cotten said. "They have access to health information, electronic medical records and so on."... [Read More](#)



Some senior hospital patients charged 10 times rates paid by Medicare

Biggest problems are for-profit hospitals located in Florida

By *Jenny Gold, Kaiser Health Nets*



Talk about sticker shock: Some U.S. hospitals charge patients more than 10 times the rates paid by Medicare. Of the **50 U.S. hospitals** with the highest charges, 49 are for-profit institutions, 20 operate in Florida, and half are owned by a single chain, according to **a study** published in the journal Health Affairs Monday.

That doesn't mean all or even most patients end up paying those charges. Private insurers are able to negotiate the sticker price down significantly. Patients paying out of pocket can often negotiate discounts or get charity care if they are low-income.

The average U.S. hospital charges a somewhat less staggering sum: 3.4 times the rates paid by Medicare, the federal health care plan for the elderly and disabled which pays fixed rates for procedures.

But for uninsured patients asked to pay full charges, insured patients who end up at an out-of-network hospital and patients whose treatment is covered by casualty or workers compensation insurance, these charges can matter a lot.

"Hopefully this is a wake-up call for people to recognize there's a problem," said Gerard Anderson, a professor of health policy at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and one of the authors of the study, which analyzed 2012 Medicare cost reports....[Read More](#)

Should old doctors be forced to retire?

By *LINDSEY TANNER, AP Medical Writer*

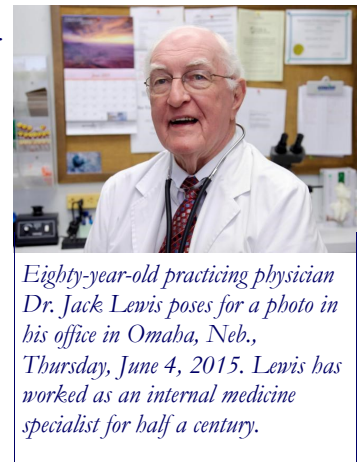
That question is the focus of a new report by an American Medical Association council that says doctors themselves should help decide when one of their own needs to stop working.

Unlike U.S. pilots, military personnel and a few other professions where mistakes can be deadly, doctors have no mandatory retirement age. All doctors must meet state licensing requirements, and some hospitals require age-based screening. But there are no national mandates or guidelines on how to make sure older physicians can still do their jobs safely.

It's time to change that, the report suggests, noting that the number of U.S. physicians aged 65 and older has quadrupled since 1975 and now numbers 240,000 — one-fourth of all U.S. doctors — although not all still see patients.

The report asks the AMA to spearhead a doctor-led effort to develop national guidelines and screening methods.

It's among more than 250 reports and resolutions prepared for the AMA's annual policy-making meeting in Chicago. AMA delegates vote Monday through Wednesday on which proposals become official AMA policy....[Read More](#)



Eighty-year-old practicing physician Dr. Jack Lewis poses for a photo in his office in Omaha, Neb., Thursday, June 4, 2015. Lewis has worked as an internal medicine specialist for half a century.

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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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

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