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RI ARA

*“Fighting for the future of our members,
NOW, more than ever!!!!”*

Affiliated with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO

May 13, 2013 E-Newsletter



Seniors Join Pro-Retiree Members of Congress to Protest Benefit Cuts

On Wednesday, May 8th, over a hundred Alliance activists joined with several leading members of the U.S. Senate and House for an energetic press event on Capitol Hill. The event was headlined by Sen. **Bernie Sanders** (I-VT), and also featured remarks by Sens. **Elizabeth Warren** (D-MA), **Jack Reed** (D-RI), and **Al Franken** (D-MN); as well as Reps. **Jan Schakowsky** (D-IL), **Keith Ellison** (D-MN), **Ted Deutch** (D-FL), **Peter DeFazio** (D-OR) and **David Cicilline** (D-RI). All of the lawmakers strongly denounced the idea of cutting Social Security benefits by switching to the Chained CPI cost-of-living adjustment formula. They made it clear that they will

protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid from any cuts, so that the programs remain strong for both the current generation of retirees and also our children and grandchildren. They also drove home the point that the wealthiest among us and corporations need to pay their fair share.

Three Alliance members spoke at the event, explaining the heartbreaking consequences that cuts to Social Security would mean for them. “I would like to extend special thank-you’s to the Alliance members who spoke on Wednesday,” said **Edward**

F. Coyle, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Regional Board member **Marty Alvarado** of Dallas, Texas, who worked in the electronics industry; **Jody Weinreich** of Allentown, Penn., who worked in the garment industry; and **Marty Walsh** of Glendale, Missouri, who worked in the insurance industry, were all quite eloquent in their remarks. They brought tears to the eyes of many who were in attendance. I was very proud to stand strong against earned benefit cuts alongside Senator Sanders and so many of our stalwart allies.”

To watch a video of the event, go to

<http://tinyurl.com/dxknfbd>. For Facebook photos, go to <http://tinyurl.com/cmeyp9e>. To see the updated Nevada Alliance state web site – featuring Nevada Alliance leaders and Alliance staff with U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid on Wednesday, go to www.nevadaretiredamericans.org.

The day before the event, AFL-CIO President **Richard Trumka** addressed Alliance activists, thanking them for their role in the 2012 elections and for their work to stop the Chained CPI.



HANDS OFF OUR SOCIAL SECURITY & MEDICARE Senators Jack Reed, Bernie Sanders, (I-VT) & Congressman David N. Cicilline at the Alliance for Retired Americans, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare and the Strengthen Social Security Campaign on May 8, 2013 in Washington, D. C.

(Note: Senator Whitehouse & Congressman Langevin were unable to make this event, however they both have co-sponsored and strongly support this position on Social Security & Medicare)



Senator Whitehouse & Senator Warren Cosponsors Legislation to Repeal the Job-Killing Sequester



Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) are inviting supporters to become “citizen cosponsors” of the **Job Preservation and Sequester Replacement Act**, which would repeal the sequester’s across-the-board spending cuts and ask the wealthiest 2% and corporations to pay their fair share.

In an e-mail, Warren said: Sequestration isn’t just dumb, it’s dangerous and irresponsible. Blunt, across the board cuts are hurting our children, our seniors, our veterans – the people who need our help the most.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse’s Job Preservation and Sequester Replacement Act ends sequestration by closing corporate tax loopholes so everyone pays a fair share. And it implements the Buffett Rule so that people who make more than \$1 million a year pay it forward so the next kid has a chance to make it big.

This is a sensible way to deal with our financial problems. But we need your help to build national support that puts pressure on Congress to pass the plan.

How Sequestration Is Devastating Programs That Aid Senior Citizens

ThinkProgress

Stories about sequestration’s harmful cuts to seniors have continued to pour in from across the country. The stories from Florida and Maine have been particularly wrenching...[Read More](#)

SENATE FDA OVERSIGHT BILL HAS BIPARTISAN BACKING

Brett Norman, Politico

A Senate panel continued to build the case Thursday for giving the Food and Drug Administration broad authority to crack down on compounding pharmacies like the one behind the deadly fungal meningitis outbreak, pledging to pass a bill before Memorial Day....[Read More](#)

ENTITLEMENTS' UNIMPEDED GROWTH IS BOON TO SENIORS

NPR/Associated Press

With Congress increasingly unable to resolve budget disputes, federal programs on automatic pilot are consuming ever larger amounts of government resources....[Read More](#)

HOUSE APPROVES PLAN TO PAY CREDITORS, SOCIAL SECURITY IF U.S. OVERSHOOTS DEBT LIMIT

Lori Montgomery, Washington Post

The Republican-controlled House narrowly approved a plan Thursday to protect U.S. bondholders and Social Security recipients if the nation breaches the federal debt limit later this year. With every Democrat and eight Republicans voting no, the measure passed 221 to 207 and headed to the Democrat-controlled Senate, where it faces certain death. President Obama has threatened to veto the measure, which Democrats have dubbed the “Pay China First” bill....

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FOR FIRST TIME ON RECORD, BLACK VOTING RATE OUTPACED RATE FOR WHITES IN 2012

Sarah Wheaton, New York Times

The turnout rate of black voters surpassed the rate for whites for the first time on record in 2012, as more black voters went to the polls than in 2008 and fewer whites did, according to a Census Bureau report released Wednesday....[Read More](#)

The American Worker Under Attack, AGAIN!!!!

U.S. House Republican Majority Votes to Axe 40-Hour Work Week

By TNDP

Memphis Congressman Steve Cohen: “Today was one of the saddest days the House of Representatives has probably ever seen.”

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman Steve Cohen (TN-09) spoke on the U.S. House floor about the House passage of HR 1406, which eliminates the 40-hour workweek. The measure, designed to drive down earnings for working Americans to inflate corporate profits, was passed with support from every Republican member of Congress from Tennessee — U.S. Reps. Phil Roe (TN-01), Jimmy Duncan (TN-02), Chuck Fleischmann (TN-03), Scott DesJarlais (TN-04), Diane Black (TN-06), Marsha Blackburn (TN-07) and Stephen Fincher (TN-08).

Democratic Reps. Jim Cooper (TN-05) and Cohen both voted against the bill which passed 223-204 mostly on party lines.

The “Pay Working Families Less Act,” which Republicans tried to call the “Working Families Flexibility Act,” would cheat workers out of overtime pay, with no guarantee of paid vacation days when employees need to use them, and give working families less flexibility, not more.

While House Republicans advertise the bill as aiming to help working families, independent evaluations have found that the bill will actually hurt them by undermining overtime pay and giving workers little flexibility.

The nonpartisan National Partnership for Women and Families finds that “The mis-named Working Families Flexibility Act will mean a pay cut for workers without any guaranteed flexibility or time off” and that the proposal “erodes the basic guarantees of the Fair Labor Standards Act: fair pay for overtime work and time off from work.”

A senior economist for the Center for Economic and Policy Research writes, “Its major effect would be to hamstring workers — likely increasing overtime hours for those who don’t want them and cutting pay for those who do.”

Instead of working to expand the middle class with reforms that reward hard work, this bill drives down pay and rolls back workers’ benefits. Republicans have entered the American worker in a global race to the bottom. The only winner is big corporate special interests.

Here’s more on the “Pay Working Families Less Act” from Congressman Cohen’s office: What this bill really means is more work and less pay for workers, not flexibility:

- **Workers will not get paid for hours that exceed 40 hours per week. That pay will instead go into an employer-controlled pot to be paid later.**
- **An employer can refuse to allow a worker to take time off to deal with a family member or attend a parent-teacher conference. This is not real flexibility for workers.**
- **Employers could schedule excessive overtime hours and only offer overtime work to workers who agree to take comp time instead of overtime wages.**

Since unused comp time will not be paid to workers until the end of the year, this amounts to an interest-free loan out of workers’ pockets to the employer.

[Click here to watch Tennessee Democratic Representative Steve Cohen’s video criticizing the House passage of this Legislation.](#)

CONGRESS MUST STOP THESE ATTACKS ON WORKING FAMILIES AND RETIRED WORKERS!!!!!!

SLOWDOWN IN HEALTH COSTS' RISE MAY LAST AS ECONOMY REVIVES

New York Times, Annie Lowrey

One of the economic mysteries of the last few years has been the bigger-than-expected slowdown in health spending, a trend that promises to bolster wages and help close the wide federal deficit over the long term — but only if it persists.

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HEALTH CONCERNS TOP LIST OF RETIREMENT WORRIES IN U.S.: STUDY

Reuters

Health problems and the cost of healthcare are the biggest concerns for those entering retirement, according to a study released on Monday from Bank of America Corp's Merrill Lynch...[Read More](#)

LOW-RISK SKIN CANCERS OFTEN TREATED TOO AGGRESSIVELY IN ELDERLY, STUDY FINDS

NY Times, Paula Span

Not only can even supposedly minor procedures have complications — 20 percent of the limited life expectancy group reported pain, numbness, itching or healing problems afterward — but the cancers grow so slowly that they're unlikely to cause problems in the patients' remaining years...[Read More](#)

AT WHAT AGE SHOULD YOU START CLAIMING SOCIAL SECURITY?

USA Today, Rodney Brooks

If you delay taking Social Security, it increases your monthly benefit about 8% a year until you're eligible for the maximum at 70. Most financial planners pretty much recommend that you do that if you can, or delay at least until age 66. But most people can't delay...[Read More](#)

U.S. SPENDING ON MEDICINES FELL FOR FIRST TIME IN 2012

Deena Beasley, Reuters

Patent expirations on big-name drugs such as Lipitor and Plavix has resulted in modestly less spending on medicines in the United States for the first time in at least 55 years, according to a report released on Thursday...[Read More](#)

SOME 2 MILLION U.S. SENIORS REFUSE MEDICARE PART D FREE MONEY

UPI

Low cognition hinders U.S. seniors' Medicare choices and it calls into question potential effectiveness of a Medicare voucher system, researchers say...[Read More](#)

SOCIAL SECURITY: IMMIGRATION BILL WOULD BOOST ECONOMY

Alan Gomez, USA Today

The Social Security Administration estimated Wednesday that a Senate bill to overhaul immigration laws and legalize 11 million unauthorized immigrants would boost the retirement program's trust fund and help the economy...[Read](#)

[More](#)

UNEMPLOYMENT HAUNTS SOCIAL SECURITY RECIPIENTS

Tami Luhby, CNN Money

Losing your job is a nasty shock at any age, but for older Americans nearing retirement, there's an extra kick: A late stretch of unemployment will haunt them throughout their Golden Years in the form of lower Social Security payments...[Read More](#)

Moderate Democratic Senators Come Out Against Chained CPI

Several Democratic Senators from swing states, who are running for reelection in 2014, have declared their opposition to the Chained CPI. Sens. **Kay Hagan** (NC), **Mark Begich** (AK), and **Mark Pryor** (AR) have co-sponsored a Senate resolution against the Chained CPI (S.Con.Res. 15). Sen. **Jeanne Shaheen** (D-NH) also opposes the benefit cut. Currently, eight of the fourteen Democrats running for reelection in 2014 have stated that they will not support the Chained CPI. To read a Huffington Post write up of the story, go to <http://tinyurl.com/cuxmu7q>.

“This is clear evidence that politicians all over the country are getting the message that voters across the political spectrum overwhelmingly oppose Chained CPI,” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. “We urge our members to keep hammering that message home. Call your members of Congress and urge them to come out against Chained CPI. If they have already done the right thing, call to thank them for their support.”

Senate Passes Older Americans Month Resolution

The U.S. Senate has passed a resolution to designate May 2013 as Older Americans Month. The resolution, which was sponsored by Sen. **Bill Nelson** (D-FL) and co-sponsored by Sen. **Susan Collins** (R-ME), Sen. **Christopher Coons** (D-MA), and Sen. Sanders, passed by unanimous consent on May 9th. The resolution points out that seniors rely on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for financial security and high quality healthcare. It also stresses the important role that seniors play within their communities by being sources of experience and knowledge. The resolution encourages the people of the United States to emphasize the importance of seniors and provide them with opportunities to share their wisdom and skills with the community. To view the resolution, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ca4rfed>.

Big Pharma Gives \$1.57 billion to CEOs, Charges Medicare Exorbitant Drug Costs

Over the last ten years, the 11 largest pharmaceutical companies have given their CEOs a combined \$1.57 billion in compensation, according to a new report from Health Care for American Now (HCAN.) The report found that the pay of the CEOs has increased considerably over the course of those ten years, particularly after the Medicare prescription drug program went into effect in 2006. Under the drug program, Medicare is not allowed to negotiate the prices of the medications it buys, which has led to a windfall for pharmaceutical companies. Sen. **Jay Rockefeller** (D-WV) has introduced legislation that would allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices. To read the HCAN report, go to <http://tinyurl.com/buoxjdu>. “This is a disgrace,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Medicare is supposed to be an earned benefit program to provide seniors with health care, not a program to further enrich the overflowing pockets of wealthy CEOs. Yet the same politicians who will not allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices have the audacity to claim Medicare is costing too much money and wrongly insist we need to cut benefits. It is time to close the prescription drug loophole and allow Medicare to negotiate for cheaper prices.”

“Observational” Hospital Stays Continue to Leave Seniors with Big Bills

Medicare recipients who need more time to recuperate after a hospital visit are entitled to a 20-day stay in a nursing home, as long as their hospitalization lasted at least 3 days. However, many seniors in this situation are being forced to pay for their own nursing home care because one or more days of their hospital stay were classified as “observational.” Medicare officials say that recipients must be “admitted patients” at the hospital for at least three days to qualify for nursing home care. Since hospitals are not required to tell patients when they are classified as “under observation,” seniors and their families often have no idea that Medicare will not be covering their nursing home costs. Since we last wrote about the issue in February, 14 seniors represented by the Center for Medicare Advocacy have filed a lawsuit for Medicare to eliminate the “observational” label. To read a *USA Today* write up of the story, go to <http://tinyurl.com/cozpdpa>.

“Medicare must swiftly end this unfair practice,” said Mr. Coyle. “Seniors and their families, who are already under a lot of emotional and financial stress, should not be faced with crippling nursing home bills because of a technicality that hospitals are not even required to inform them about.”
