



### President Obama Nominates Social Security Trustee Who Promoted Privatization to Second Term



President Obama recently nominated **Charles Blahous** and

Robert Reischauer to second terms as Social Security and Medicare Public Trustees and this week the Senate Finance Committee held confirmation hearings for both nominees.

The Alliance and numerous other organizations that support Social

Security, strongly opposes the Blahous renomination. He is far from a neutral expert on social insurance but served as the executive director of former President George W. Bush's "Commission to Strengthen Social Security." That Commission developed plans to privatize Social Security, which were soundly rejected by the Congress. Blahous is affiliated with the conservative Mercatus Center.

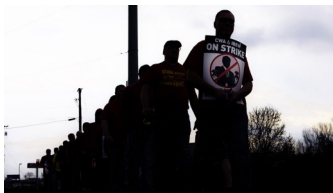
"As a Mercatus Center fellow Blahous has said that Social Security is **too generous to retirees** and advocated

against ways to strengthen the system," said Robert Roach, President of the Alliance. "It is not appropriate for a trustee, whose job is to ensure the continued viability of the Social Security system to be actively working against it."

Help us keep Charles Blahous from serving another term as a Social Security Trustee. Please click to tell your Senator to oppose this nomination <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/a-fox-guarding-the-social-security-hen-house>

### Lives on the line: As Verizon strike drags on, strikers struggle to make ends meet.

By Sarah Hall



Stephanie and Ed Piston have been through four strikes

with Verizon. But they've never seen one stretch out this long.

"Really, since it went to Verizon from Bell Atlantic, I think there's only one time we haven't been on strike," said Ed Piston, an outside field technician who started with the company 26 years ago. "This is the longest one we've had since we've been with the company."

"And we've been with the company since it was New York Telephone — NYNEX, Bell Atlantic and now Verizon," said Stephanie, a construction coordinator who has been with Verizon for 24 years.

This strike has another dubious distinction for the Pistons, who live in

North Syracuse.

"This is the first time we've actually lost all of our benefits," Ed said. "The way they say it, they always pay them the first of the month and it goes through the whole month. We've been on strike before for three days or two weeks. They've never taken them away. This time, right on May 1, gone — life insurance, medical benefits, the whole nine yards."

The Pistons are among 110,000 Verizon employees and family members to lose benefits effective April 30, when the company cancelled them for all strikers. The longer the strike goes on, the longer strikers and their families bear the burden of going without — without pay, without health benefits and without the certainty and comfort of a secure job.

"I'm scared," Stephanie admitted. "I'm scared of what's going to happen the longer this goes on..." [Read More](#)

### Newly Elected ARA New England Regional Board Member

It give me great pride and pleasure to announce that on Thursday, May 19, 2016, Roger Boudreau, RI ARA Vice-President & RIAFTR, President, was unanimously elected by the New England affiliated ARA chapter caucus in Washington, DC to the position of ARA Northeastern Regional Board Member.

I know Roger will be a great asset to the six New England ARA affiliated chapter president and their members.

We look forward to working with Roger amid the challenges that face our members in the future.

From all of us to you Roger, **GOOD LUCK.**

John A. Pernorio, RI ARA President



# RETIRING WITHOUT SOCIAL SECURITY

## Social Security Fairness

Most Americans count on Social Security as a significant piece of their retirement plan.

For some, it will be a nice supplement to their pension or their personal savings; for others, it will be their entire retirement benefit. The nation recently celebrated Social Security's 80th birthday and its success at providing a dignified retirement for many Americans. For some workers, however, Social Security does not factor into their retirement plan.

In twelve states and parts of three others, state and local public employees do not contribute to Social Security and, therefore, do not receive benefits from it

in retirement. For these workers, their defined benefit pension and their personal savings are their only sources of retirement income. When Social Security was created, these state and local governments chose not to enroll their employees in the program because they believed the pension benefits they offered were better than what the employees would receive in Social Security.

Now, unfortunately, firefighters, librarians, and other public employees in some of these states face threats to their pensions. Cuts to their pensions would be particularly harmful to these workers since they do not have Social Security to rely on in retirement. Imagine if Congress tried to cut Social Security benefits. It would

devastate millions of aging Americans and their families. That's exactly what a firefighter in California or a teacher in Missouri would face if some politicians got their way and cut pensions.

**Below is a list of the states where public employees are not covered by Social Security:**

**Alaska • California • Colorado • Connecticut • Georgia (certain local governments) • Illinois • Kentucky (certain local governments) • Louisiana • Maine • Massachusetts • Missouri • Nevada • Ohio • Rhode Island (certain local governments) • Texas**

**[Read More](#)**  
**National Public Pension Coalition**

## Fix For VA Health Snarls Veterans And Doctors In New Bureaucracy

By **Quil Lawrence**, NPR News and **Eric Whitney**, Montana Public Radio and **Michael Tomsic**, WFAE

Veterans are *still* waiting to see a doctor. Two years ago, vets were waiting a long time for care at Veterans Affairs clinics. At one facility in Phoenix, for example, veterans waited on average 115 days for an appointment. Adding insult to injury, some VA schedulers were told to falsify data to make it look like the waits weren't that bad. The whole scandal ended up forcing the resignation of the VA secretary at the time, Eric Shinseki.

Congress and the VA came up with a fix: Veterans Choice, a \$10 billion program. Veterans received a card that was supposed to allow them to see a non-

VA doctor if they were either more than 40 miles away from a VA facility or they were going to have to wait longer than 30 days for a VA provider to see them.

The problem was, Congress gave them only 90 days to set up the system. Facing that deadline, the VA turned to two private companies to administer the program — helping veterans get an appointment with a doctor and then working with the VA to pay that doctor.

It sounds like a simple idea but it's not working. Wait times have gotten worse. There are 70,000 more vets waiting at least a month for an appointment than

there were at this time last year.

The VA claims there has been a massive increase in demand for care, but the problem has more to do with the way Veterans Choice was set up. It is confusing and complicated. Vets don't understand it, doctors don't understand it and even VA administrators admit they can't always figure it out....**[Read More](#)**



## Five Health Issues Presidential Candidates Aren't Talking About — But Should Be

By **Julie Rovner**



References to the Affordable Care Act — sometimes called Obamacare —

have been a regular feature of the current presidential campaign season.

For months, Republican candidates have pledged to repeal it, while Democrat Hillary Clinton wants to build on it and Democrat Bernie Sanders wants to replace it with a government-funded "Medicare for All" program.

But much of the policy discussion stops there. Yet the nation in the next few years faces many important decisions about health care — most of which have little to do with the controversial federal health law.

Here are five issues candidates should be discussing, but largely are not:

### ◆ **Out-of-pocket spending**

A recent **[Gallup survey](#)** found health costs to be the top financial problem faced by adults in the United States, outpacing low wages and housing costs.

### ◆ **Drugs — more than prices**

Rising drug prices at the pharmacy counter have also proved problematic for patients.

### ◆ **Long-term care**

An estimated **70 percent** of people will need some sort of long-term care.

### ◆ **Medicare**

Medicare accounts for **14 percent** of all federal spending

### ◆ **Dental care**

Coverage for adults remains spotty as well. Medicare does not cover Dental.

**[Read More on each subject](#)**

# U.S. Government Study Shows Why the TPP Should Not Be Passed

*But Report Ignores the Impact of Higher Prescription Drug Prices on American Consumers and Retirees*



Rich Fiasta

*Richard Fiasta, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans, released the following statement regarding the International Trade Commission*

*(ITC) TPP report that was released today:*

“The ITC Report proves that our concerns about the TPP were well founded. It admits that there will be fewer

manufacturing jobs and assumes that workers who lose jobs would immediately find new ones. That has not been our experience with any previous global trade agreement, and we have no confidence that the TPP would be any different.

“Most troubling to older Americans, the report fails to take into account the high drug costs that are expected to result from the TPP. Prescription drug costs are increasing much faster than inflation, and the TPP will only make the situation

worse. The TPP agreement would enable drug companies to fight the cost-control measures already used by Medicare and Medicaid and may prevent Congress from enacting additional cost-control measures in the future.”

More information about the link between the TPP and drug prices is available at <http://retiredamericans.org/trans-pacific-partnership-tpp/>

## RIARA HealthLink Wellness News



### Driving: the New Elephant in the Room for Seniors

**Living without a car can be difficult and inconvenient – but is it safe for seniors to be behind the wheel?**

Loss of driving ability has been associated with depression and worsening physical impairments in older persons.

Some of the most difficult physician-patient discussions revolve around the issue of driving. Driving is a part of everyday life in America – a necessity that allows you to go to work on a regular basis, visit friends and family, and manage everyday activities, such as shopping for groceries, going to church and transporting children and grandchildren. Unless a person lives in a metropolitan area with well-developed public transportation, living without a

car can be difficult and inconvenient.

But many individuals develop limitations in their ability to continue to drive independently. Vision problems interfere with a person's ability to see the road and avoid objects and other vehicles. Hearing problems hinder the ability to modify driving at the sound of car horns or police/fire department sirens. Arthritis, Parkinson's disease and the effects of stroke can impair a person's ability to perform the mechanics of driving. Cognitive impairment or dementia can interfere with a person's ability to remember directions to familiar locations or the rules of the road.

Concerns about driving ability noticed by the individual or by family should not be ignored. Family members refusing to allow an individual to drive them or their children should be considered red flags. Unexplained dents and scratches on the car, new traffic citations for accidents and running through red lights and stop signs are also clues that there are driving problems. Often, individuals with driving limitations will self-limit their driving to familiar locations, ...[Read More](#)



### Maintaining Bone Health Is Important for Healthy Aging

**Contrary to popular belief, osteoporosis is not a part of normal aging.**



The bones in our bodies are an architectural wonder. They support the body and allow us to move in any number of ways and directions and at slow and fast speeds. Our bones also protect our other internal organs from injury. The human skeleton is both our best offense and defense in staying safe and secure.

According to the National Institute of Arthritis Musculoskeletal and Skin

Diseases, bone is a living, growing tissue made mostly of two biological materials that structure our frames and provide strength and hardness. This combination of materials allows bone to be both strong and flexible to protect our bodies. As our bones grow, they also shed off tissue as part of their intricate reshaping process. Osteoporosis, literally "porous bones," is a disease that interrupts the natural rhythm of bone health by causing bone growth to slow, lose density or mass and develop an abnormal structure. These affected bones are weak and are more

likely to break.

May is an important month for taking account of your bone health, as it's National Osteoporosis Month. Contrary to popular belief, osteoporosis is not a part of normal aging. Older people are not supposed to have hunched backs or frequently broken bones. **Osteoporosis** is an insidious disease that occurs when the body loses too much bone, makes too little bone or both. As a result, bones become weak and may break from a fall or, in serious cases, from sneezing or minor bumps....[Read More](#)

## Healthy aging has little to do with age: study

New research into healthy aging recommends support for lonely individuals.



When it comes to maintaining health in one's older years, age means little and

obesity may not be so bad after all, according to a U.S. study released Monday.

Factors such as loneliness, depression and having broken a bone recently are more likely to predict a person's risk of dying in the next five years, researchers at the University of Chicago found.

"The healthiest people were obese and robust," said the study in the Proceedings of the National Academies of Science, which found that 22 per cent of older Americans fit that definition of good

health despite higher obesity and blood pressure.

They had fewer organ system diseases, better mobility, sensory function and psychological health than others.

They were also the least likely to die or become incapacitated five years into the study, which involved 3,000 people aged 57 to 85.

Researchers also uncovered new classes of people at twice the risk of dying or becoming incapacitated in five years.

They include those of normal weight who face one key health problem such as thyroid disease, anemia or ulcers, those who had broken a bone since age 45, and those with poor mental health.

The most unhealthy are those with uncontrolled diabetes and high blood

pressure, and who often face challenges getting around and performing daily tasks. "Instead of policies focused on reducing obesity as a much lamented health condition, greater support for reducing loneliness among isolated older adults or restoring sensory functions would be more effective in enhancing health and wellbeing in the older population," said co-author Edward Laumann of the University of Chicago.

Although cancer caused 24 per cent of deaths among people over 55, it "seemed to develop randomly with respect to other organ system diseases," the study said.

...[Read More](#)

## Redefining health and well-being in America's aging population

Chronological age itself plays almost no role in accounting for differences in older people's health and well-being, according to a new, large-scale study by a multidisciplinary team of researchers at the University of Chicago.

The work, part of the National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project (NSHAP), supported by the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health, is a major longitudinal survey of a representative sample of 3,000 people aged 57 to 85 done by the independent

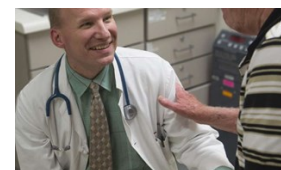
research organization NORC at UChicago. The study yielded comprehensive new data about the experience of aging in America that formed the underpinning of the research and its conclusions.

The research presents a sharp departure from the traditional biomedical model's reliance on a checklist of infirmities centered on heart disease, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, and cholesterol levels.

Using what they call a "comprehensive model" of health and aging, the team

has shown how other factors such as psychological well-being, sensory function, mobility and health behaviors are essential parts of an overall health profile that better predicts mortality.

...[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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**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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