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RI ARA

*“Fighting for the future of our members,
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Affiliated with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO



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October 6, 2014 E-Newsletter

George H. Nee: Constitutional Convention bad for union workers



BY GEORGE H. NEE

On Nov. 4, Rhode Islanders will have the opportunity to vote on whether or not they wish to convene a Constitutional Convention (Con Con). We stand on the brink of a dangerous precipice. If Question 3 is approved, the floodgates will be opened to out-of-state special interests, and our Constitution could be radically altered and our rights stolen.

Individuals have written about the dangers a Con Con would be to our civil rights. We have heard from those who remember the 1986 Con Con and the detrimental attacks that were made on the rights of women and minority groups in our state. Rhode Islanders were right to be worried then, and they are right to be concerned now. We can expect those attacks to resume, and this time we can expect that they will include the rights of workers in the Ocean State.

The landscape has changed drastically for the working class since the 1986 Con Con. Attacks on unions nationwide have weakened our economy, and the ripple effects have left us all reeling. The middle class is shrinking. Wages have stagnated. Worker safety is no longer a priority. The rise of Right-to-Work laws have had a detrimental effect on workers in states across our country. Collective bargaining rights have been limited in places like Wisconsin. The recent Supreme Court ruling in *Harris vs. Quinn* reminds us that the war on workers' rights is ongoing!

It is well known that our economy and the rights of workers go hand in hand. Many Americans still look back to the “good old days,” when our middle class was strong and union membership was at its peak. Well, our economy has gone the way of the unions. Union membership is down (as a percentage of the workforce) and the gap between the rich and the poor is rising.

Here in Rhode Island, attempts have been made to introduce Right-to-Work legislation to our General Assembly. Workers in states that have passed such legislation earn lower wages and experience higher workplace fatality rates. Fortunately, attempts to pass such legislation in Rhode Island have failed, but, should we convene a Constitutional Convention, you can bet that workers' rights will be on the chopping block. This is a route our state cannot afford to take. Public employee bargaining rights and private sector prevailing wage laws could also be threatened by the convening of a Constitutional Convention.

I have heard those who are in favor of a Con Con refer to those of us who are rightfully concerned about our civil rights and worker rights as fear mongers. Nothing could be further from the truth. RenewRI, a group that recently formed in support of a Con Con, counts as one of its members Mike Stenhouse, the CEO of the Rhode Island Center for Freedom and Prosperity, a champion of Right to-Work-laws for Rhode Island. Under the guise of government reform, this group will encourage Rhode Islanders to ignore our concerns. Do not be fooled! They do not support our best interests!

The recent Preparatory Commission report estimated that the cost of holding a Con Con would be millions of dollars. At a time when valuable community services are at risk, our taxpayer dollars would be better spent in any number of ways. To convene a Con Con when we already have an effective system in place to amend our Constitution would, put simply, be a waste of our money. To proponents of a Con Con, the millions of dollars spent is not a lot of money, but consider how that money could better help our communities.

Rhode Islanders are no strangers to fighting for what is right. We have a proud history of standing up for the rights of workers. Our constant vigilance keeps us aware of what is really at stake. Come Nov. 4, I know Rhode Island's workers won't be let down. Vote to reject Question 3.

George H. Nee is president of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO

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Constitutional Convention Bad for Union Workers & Rhode Island

CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

As many of you know, our organization, the Rhode Island Alliance *for* Retired Americans, is a proud member of Citizens for Responsible Government, the coalition leading the effort to REJECT Question 3 on the November 4 ballot. A Constitutional Convention poses significant risks to our Civil Rights, and it is up to us to get our message out to the public!

On Wednesday, October 1, 2014, the Citizens for Responsible Government released a 90 second campaign video ad urging voters to reject ballot question 3, which will ask voters to approve or reject a Constitutional Convention. The video highlights the threat to Rhode Islanders' civil rights and the role that wealthy special interests can potentially play if a Constitutional Convention is approved. The coalition has also begun circulating a petition asking the people of Rhode Island to reject a Constitutional Convention and reject Question 3. You can view the ad here: <http://rejectquestion3.com/>. Please share this with everyone you know, and urge them to REJECT Question 3!

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**An online petition has also been launched:
Please sign on to this petition, and share it with your family and friends!**

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Coalition Statement of Principles Against a Constitutional Convention

Background

We are a coalition of individuals and organizations united to oppose the calling of a Rhode Island Constitutional Convention. Article XIV of the Rhode Island Constitution requires that at least every ten years, Rhode Island voters determine whether or not they desire to hold a constitutional convention. The last time the issue was considered, in 2004, voters rejected the convening of a constitutional convention.

Principles

Our member organizations and individuals hold a variety of beliefs in opposition to the calling of a constitutional convention. We are united by these shared beliefs:

- ◆ We Must Protect Our Civil Rights
- ◆ Our Constitution is Not For Sale
- ◆ We Already Have Effective Means of Changing Governance
- ◆ Our Money Is Better Spent Elsewhere

Objectives

This coalition was convened to oppose efforts to approve a constitutional convention when the issue appears on the November 4, 2014 ballot. We have come together to:

- ◆ Raise awareness about the impending public vote on the Constitutional Convention in 2014.
- ◆ Voice objection to the Constitutional Convention by sharing our concerns.
- ◆ Ensure that the public is informed that the Constitutional Convention process is a significant threat to our rights and liberties.
- ◆ Insist that the preparatory commission report reflects realistic estimates on the cost associated with the convening of a Constitutional Convention.
- ◆ Educate the public that adequate means of amending our constitution currently exist and that General Assembly approval of ballot questions, such as the 2004 separation of powers amendment, has made significant change in our state's governance.

**For more information about Citizens for Responsible Government
Contact Jennifer Norris, MSW 401-241-7413 or <http://ricfrg.org/>**



REJECT Question 3 on November 4th



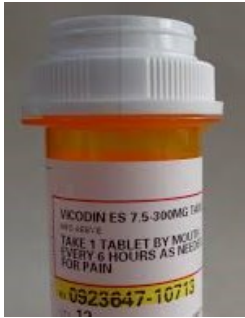
Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which is an annual campaign to increase awareness of the disease. While most people are aware of breast cancer, many forget to take the steps to have a plan to detect the disease in its early stages and encourage others to do the same. We have made a lot of progress but still have a long way to go and need your help! [Learn More](#)

Vicodin, Other Pain Killers with Hydrocodone Will Be Harder to Get

Patients generally must present a written prescription, doctors will no longer be able to call in a prescription

By Michelle Andrews, Kaiser Health News



Patients who use drugs containing hydrocodone as a pain reliever or cough suppressant are going to have to jump through more hoops to get them starting next month. The Drug Enforcement Administration is reclassifying so-called "hydrocodone combination products" from Schedule III to Schedule II under the Controlled Substances Act, which will more tightly restrict access.

Vicodin, for example, is an **HCP because it has hydrocodone and acetaminophen.**

The final regulation, which takes effect Oct. 6, will mean that patients generally must present a written prescription to receive the drug, and doctors will no longer be able to call in a prescription to the pharmacy in most instances. The **regulation** is a response to the widespread misuse of prescription pain killers.

In an emergency, doctors will still be able to call in a prescription, according to the new rule. And although prescription refills are prohibited, a doctor can, at his discretion, issue multiple prescriptions that would provide up to a 90-day supply.

These measures don't satisfy consumer advocates or pharmacists who are opposed to the new rule.

While acknowledging that there has been an uptick in abuse and adverse events related to opioid painkillers, one patient advocate says the new rule restricts access indiscriminately.

"We certainly want steps taken to reduce adverse outcomes, but we don't think this particular rescheduling was the appropriate way to go about doing that," says Mark Fleury, a policy analyst at the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network... [Read More](#)

Hydrocodone Help for Seniors

"Many senior citizens take a plethora of prescription drugs for the many health problems they experience.

"According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or SAMHSA, three in 10 elderly people ages 57-85 are prescribed at least five medications for their health issues.

"What is more is that many of these people take hydrocodone for pain related to problems like arthritis or orthopedic complications.

"In short, senior citizens may become addicted to this powerful painkiller, so seek professional help to manage not only the addiction, but also any other physical conditions your loved one has."

Read more at - [Hydrocodone Help](#)

Heart Attacks in Older Men May Drop 80% with Modest Diet, Lifestyle Changes

Study of over 20,000 men age 45 to 79 published in Journal of the American College of Cardiology

If you are a male senior citizens this study should get your attention. It concludes that 80 percent - four out of five - of heart attacks (myocardial infarctions) in men may be preventable with a relatively easy combination low-risk behavior in diet and lifestyle.

The new study published in the **Journal of the American College of Cardiology** studied a population-based group of 20,721 men ages 45 to 79 years old.

Agneta Akesson, PhD, associate professor at the Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden, and colleagues examined the benefit of combined diet and lifestyle practices on the incidence of MI (myocardial infarction) in men

These men had no history of cancer, cardiovascular disease diabetes, hypertension or high cholesterol levels... [Read More](#)

The 51-point Recommended Food Score (RFS) measures dietary diversity in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. It awards points for weekly intake of 51 foods (e.g. fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean meats and poultry). (**More on RFS**)



Seniors are 90% of Flu Deaths; Just 65% Get Free Medicare Vaccinations

Actions those senior citizens 65 and older need to take this flu season with links to lots of information - CDC says get shot by October



There is a reason that senior citizens are the focus of attention when flu season approaches - 90 percent of seasonal flu-related deaths and between 50 and 60 percent of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations in the U.S. occur in people 65 years and older, according to government estimates. Knowing these numbers and that Medicare provides free flu shots, it should be easy to convince seniors to get vaccinated.

It has been recognized for many years that people 65 years and older are at greater risk of serious complications from the flu compared with young, healthy adults. This is because human immune defenses become weaker with age. So influenza can be a very serious disease for people 65 and older.

Yet, only about 65% of those age 65 and older get a flu shot...[Read More](#)

Social Security Opens New National Support Center

Social Security opened a new National Support Center (NSC) today in Urbana, MD., that the agency says is a state-of-the-art data center that will meet the agency's anticipated IT workloads for at least the next 20 years.

The NSC meets industry and federal data center standards but is also energy efficient and has enhanced disaster recovery capabilities..

"The data housed in the NSC is critical to our day-to-day operations and essential to maintaining our computer systems and electronic services," said Carolyn W. Colvin, Acting Commissioner of Social Security.

"Social Security has always been known as a 'can-do' agency with world-class customer service; this new facility allows us to meet the growing demands of the millions of individuals who count on us each and every day."...[Read More](#)



Most Allergic Deaths from Medications; Older People, African-Americans Usual Victims

Montefiore/Einstein research seeks risk factors to allow physicians to develop preventative strategies



When we hear of allergy-related sudden death, most of us probably think of something in the surrounding environment – like a plant, or something in the air. We would be wrong. Medications are the leading cause of allergy-related sudden deaths in the U.S. And, the risk of fatal drug-induced allergic reactions is increasing rapidly and is particularly high among older people and African-Americans.

An analysis of death certificates from 1999 to 2010 was conducted by researchers at Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University. Their study was published online today in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

Anaphylaxis is the term used for a severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction that can occur within seconds or minutes following exposure to an allergen. Until now, data on trends in anaphylactic deaths - or even the number of yearly deaths from anaphylactic shock - has not been well-defined. One reason: unlike countries such as the UK, the U.S. doesn't maintain a national registry for anaphylaxis deaths.

"Anaphylaxis-related deaths in the U.S. have not been well understood in recent years," said Elina Jerschow, M.D., M.Sc. director, Drug Allergy Center, Allergy and Immunology Division of Medicine, Montefiore Medical Center, and assistant professor of medicine, Albert Einstein College, the lead author of the study.

"We hope these findings will help in identifying specific risk factors and allow physicians to formulate preventative approaches."

Dr. Jerschow and colleagues analyzed death certificates from the U.S. National Mortality Database and found that medication-related anaphylaxis was the most common cause of death (58.8 percent). [Read More](#)

U.S. Seniors Achieve Highest Home Equity Since 2008 Crash

Reverse mortgage group tracking shows seniors paying off more of home equity



Americans 62 years old and older now have more equity in their homes than at any time since early 2008, according to a quarterly measurement by the National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association (NRMLA). The NRMLA's quarterly measure that analyzes trends in home values, home equity, and mortgage debt of homeowners 62 and older, has reached 178.91, its highest level since Q4 2007.

This RiskSpan Reverse Mortgage Market Index (RMMI) is updated quarterly and began in 2000.

The RMMI tracking shows collective home equity of Americans 62 and older has grown by more than 22 percent since Q2 was the largest quarterly increase in equity since Q3 2005. The households of American seniors now have paid 77 percent of equity in their homes.

Mortgage debt held by Americans 62 and older stands at \$1.08 trillion, a figure which has held steady over the past three quarters. Senior mortgage debt peaked at \$1.143 trillion in the fourth quarter of 2009.

In the second quarter of 2014, the RMMI reached 178.91. The index has risen for nine consecutive quarters. The senior housing value estimate is based on the Federal Housing Finance Agency's Q2 2014 all-transactions Indices.

[Read More](#)

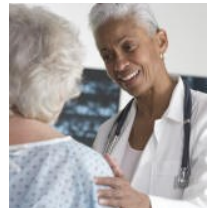
Many Senior Women Receive Unnecessary Pap Tests

Surprised that so many women over age 65 reported recent Pap test; unnecessary tests can result in stress for the patient, increased costs, and inefficient use of time

By Stephanie Stephens, HBNS Contributing Writer

As many as half to two-thirds of women who have undergone hysterectomies or are older than 65 years in the United States report receiving Pap tests for cervical cancer. This prevalence is surprising in light of the 2003 U.S. Preventive Services Taskforce guidelines recommending that women discontinue Pap testing if they have received a total hysterectomy without a history of cervical cancer and if they are over age 65 years with ongoing and recent normal Pap test results...[Read](#)

[More](#)



Spanish Friday Alert now Available

The *Friday Alert* will now be available each week in Spanish! To see last week's *Alerta Semanal*, go to <http://tinyurl.com/mq7gpry>. For the Alliance's Spanish language page, which includes fact sheets and other translated documents from the main site, go to <http://tinyurl.com/nllcz6n>. More outreach from the Alliance to the Hispanic elder community will be coming in the next few months.

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

Petition Subject: Observation Stays: "Current Hospital Issues in the Medicare Program"

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**Get The Message Out:
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Petition Subject: House Concurrent Resolution 67 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 26 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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