

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Wisconsin Governor Recall Effort Advances; Retirees Help Get a Million Signatures

A million signatures were turned in on Tuesday to begin the formal process of forcing a recall election for Wisconsin Governor **Scott Walker** (R). The petitions delivered to the Government Accountability Board arrived on a truck and weighed over 3000 pounds. The signatures collected and submitted exceeded the number required to force a recall by 460,000. In addition to the Governor, Wisconsinites also turned in the required signatures to recall the Lieutenant Governor and three state Senators.

Seniors in Wisconsin, including WI Alliance members, were active in circulating hundreds of petitions to recall the Governor and the Lt. Governor. In addition to circulating petitions, Wisconsin retirees from all walks of life volunteered time for data entry and validating the signed petitions. Wisconsin Alliance leaders spoke to many retiree clubs to organize their membership around the recall efforts. Wisconsin Alliance members also organized and participated in many recall events around the state, including this one at the Milwaukee Airport featured in Sunday's *New York Times*: <http://nyti.ms/xt3WR8>.

“The number of signatures and the amount of support for the recall that culminated by the time of delivery far exceeded many Wisconsinites’ expectations,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

Republican Field for President Narrows

With Texas Governor **Rick Perry** dropping out of the race for the Republican nomination for President on Thursday, the race is now down to four candidates. During the South Carolina GOP debate earlier in the week, on Monday night, former Sen. **Rick Santorum** (PA) called former Speaker of the U.S. House **Newt Gingrich** (GA) “irresponsible” in referencing his plan for privatizing Social Security. According to *The Hill* newspaper, Gingrich is receiving a congressional pension of more than \$100,000 per year from his two-decade career in Congress.

To see former Massachusetts Governor **Mitt Romney** at the debate, speaking about ending Medicare as we know it in favor of vouchers, go to <http://bit.ly/xz5OA9>. Romney also attacked the Affordable Care Act, which provides free preventive care for seniors, calling it “the Fourth Entitlement.” Rep. **Ron Paul** (R-TX) is the fourth remaining candidate.

Americans are Raiding Savings to Make Ends Meet, Putting Retirement at Risk

Four years after the initial recession, according to the *Huffington Post* and Reuters, increased withdrawals from college and retirement funds and boosts in credit card usage are leading policy makers to think more Americans are using these accounts for more day-to-day living. Loans taken from retirement savings accounts leapt anywhere from 20-60%, and 27% of workers are “not at all

confident” that they will have enough funds for a comfortable retirement. To see the full article, go to <http://huff.to/wH6cBs>.

Barbara Easterling Speaks Out About Effect on Seniors of Voter ID Requirements

Also in the *Huffington Post*, a column by Alliance President **Barbara J. Easterling** was published on Thursday. In her column, “Don’t Take the Vote Away From Seniors,” Ms. Easterling draws attention to the many problems that new Voter Identification laws pose for retirees. To read it, go to <http://huff.to/x52997>.

Hawaii Alliance for Retired Americans Holds its Convention

The Hawaii Alliance’s (HARA’s) 4th Biennial Convention was held in Honolulu on Saturday, with about seventy delegates and guests attending. Three members of Hawaii’s congressional delegation addressed the convention--U.S. Senator **Dan Akaka** (D), whom HARA presented with their Shining Light Award for his 35 years of distinguished service in Congress; Rep. **Mazie Hirono** (D); and Rep. **Colleen Hanabusa** (D). Conference attendees also heard from **Richard Fiesta**, Director of the national Alliance’s Department of Government and Political Affairs, and several other well-received speakers. The delegates elected **Justin Wong** as the new HARA President. The new Vice President is **Elmer Yuen**; **Jackie Foil** was reelected Secretary; and **Phyllis Hiramatsu** was reelected Treasurer. For links to the Hawaii Convention photos, go to <http://bit.ly/xe7PiT> (set) and <http://bit.ly/AjXoHt> (slideshow). To see additional Hawaii Alliance photos from the past, go to <http://bit.ly/ykpmMk>.

“In addition to welcoming Justin Wong, I would like to say a special 'thank-you' to **Al Hamai**, outgoing President of the Hawaii Alliance,” said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the national Alliance. “All of us at the Alliance want to express our deepest gratitude for all of his work. Al has long embodied what it means to be a good citizen in the retiree movement. Whatever has been asked of him – writing a letter to the editor, making a lobby visit, or traveling great distances to an Alliance meeting – Al has always stepped up to help current and future retirees.”

National Academy of Social Insurance Elects New Members

Both Mr. Fiesta and the Alliance’s **Sarah Byrne**, Senior Legislative Representative, were elected to the National Academy of Social Insurance. Read more, and see who else was elected as new members, at <http://bit.ly/s9yMps>.

Washington State Retirees Speak up for Access to Social Security Offices

The Social Security Administration (SSA) plans to close neighborhood offices in Seattle this spring, replacing them with an office in the high-security Jackson Federal Building. Rather than the offices seniors and the disabled go to now, Seattle-area residents will be required to navigate often-intimidating Homeland Security checkpoints in the downtown federal building — and possibly be searched – in order to check in with federal workers about their benefits. Last Friday, the Washington State Alliance and the Puget Sound Alliance co-hosted a public meeting with other groups, including the American Federation of Government Employees, to share stories, hear from public officials, and see how to be involved. For a video about saving access to Seattle's SSA offices, go to <http://bit.ly/ynWKrc>.