

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006

202.637.5399 • www.retiredamericans.org • arafridayalert@retiredamericans.org

July 30, 2010

Alliance Celebrates the 45th Birthday of Medicare

Today is the 45th birthday of Medicare, and Alliance members are holding dozens of events from New Hampshire to Arizona commemorating the occasion! From cake in Indianapolis to lobbying visits in Missouri, the events used a wide array of treats and techniques to drive home the point that Medicare has literally been a lifesaver for millions of seniors. To see the photos from the party of **Judy Cato**, Executive Vice President of the Alliance, and her crew in White Plains, Maryland on Wednesday, go to <http://bit.ly/9VGoP2>. For video footage, go to <http://bit.ly/9uy0RM>.

Also on Wednesday, Alliance President **Barbara J. Easterling** wrote in the *Huffington Post* that “This year is an especially happy birthday for Medicare because the new health reform law makes it easier for seniors to afford to see a doctor, fill a prescription, and receive free preventive screenings and tests for serious diseases.” To see the entire column, go to <http://huff.to/dwQYfD>. A new ad featuring **Andy Griffith**, describing important improvements to Medicare made by the Affordable Care Act in advance of Medicare Open Enrollment, can be seen by visiting www.Medicare.gov.

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations, a coalition of 64 non-profits - including the Alliance - advocating for seniors, sent a statement commemorating Medicare’s birthday to the entire U.S. House of Representatives. The statement declared that in 1965, Medicare and Medicaid were established, “vastly improving the quality of life for older adults. Before these programs were enacted, one-half of America’s seniors were uninsured. The health care coverage provided by Medicare and Medicaid has meant better health, longer lives, and less financial strain for older people.” In 2010, it continued, “Medicare is the largest source of health coverage in the nation, covering 47 million older adults and people with disabilities.”

Fiscal Commission Meets Again, Considers Medicare, Social Security Cuts

The Wednesday, July 28th meeting of the President’s Fiscal Commission, which is charged with fixing the federal budget deficit, featured testimony from **Maya MacGuineas**, President of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a conservative organization funded by the right-wing Pete Peterson Foundation. MacGuineas mentioned raising the retirement age as a viable option to help generate savings. Sen. **Max Baucus** (D-MT) made the point that the debate must shift away from spending cuts and start to focus more on revenue raising options, saying that capping mandatory spending on entitlement programs such as Social Security will undoubtedly generate minimal savings at the expense of deserving beneficiaries. For an Alliance summary of the happenings at Wednesday’s meeting, go to <http://bit.ly/c2tIlb>.

Social Security’s 75th Birthday Festivities Begin

Speaker **Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA), House Democratic Leaders, and House Democrats held a press event on Wednesday on the steps of the U.S. Capitol to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the

Social Security Act, which President **Franklin D. Roosevelt** signed into law on August 14, 1935. At the event, the Speaker blasted Republicans for trying to privatize Social Security, saying the change would have resulted in the trust fund incurring a massive loss due to the downturn in the stock market. Last Saturday in Las Vegas, at the “Netroots Nation” convention, the Speaker said that she is opposed to raising the retirement age. House Minority Leader **John Boehner** (R-OH) has said that he favors raising the Social Security retirement age to 70.

On Thursday, more than 60 groups, including the Alliance, announced the creation of the coalition “Strengthen Social Security...Don’t Cut It.” The new group is launching a major mobilization to push back against Fiscal Commission assertions, backed by the Wall Street spin machine, that claim Social Security is a major component of the budget deficit and is teetering on the brink of disaster. In a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., the group outlined plans to build support in Congress to fight benefits cuts and press candidates this election to push back against any move to raise the retirement age or privatize the program. “We are united by our concerns over the new Fiscal Commission, which operates in virtual secrecy and with a fundamentally flawed understanding of how Social Security is financed and operates. There is no government financial commitment at all. Every dime comes from workers and employers,” **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance, said at the event. The new group’s web site is <http://www.strengthensocialsecurity.org>. For more information, go to the AFL-CIO blog at <http://bit.ly/bk160P>. For photos of the press conference, go to <http://bit.ly/dixNaW>. For a new Alliance document on Social Security Disability Insurance, visit <http://bit.ly/bMs5Eu>.

Insurers Try to Get Around the New Health Care Law

After spending millions of dollars to fight health care reform, insurance companies have now shifted their focus towards finding methods of weakening the new law and loopholes around consumer protections. According to a new report by the coalition Health Care for America Now, available at <http://bit.ly/dAHmlT>, insurers are trying to get around new rules that require premium dollars be spent only on actual medical care, and not on administration, executive pay, and marketing. The new rules are being written by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, who have found themselves being furiously lobbied by the insurance industry.

Home-Care Service Cuts Rip through Communities

Home-care services for seniors have been put on the chopping block, another casualty of severe budget shortfalls. According to *The New York Times*, at least 25 states and D.C. have curtailed programs that include meal deliveries, housekeeping aid, and assistance for family caregivers. The cuts threaten to reverse a growing trend of seniors staying in their homes as they age, rather than in a nursing home. Alliance Secretary-Treasurer **Ruben Burks** criticized the cuts, saying, “Legislators are turning their backs on seniors who have worked all their lives to build their communities.”

Did You Know...

A new survey sponsored by the National Council on Aging (NCOA) found that only 24% knew that the new health law will extend the solvency of Medicare, and only 14% were aware that the reforms are projected to cut deficit spending.