

Alliance Press Clips for October 21, 2011

Alliance Mentions

Editorial: Retired citizens suffer another economic hit
The Delaware County Daily Times
Thursday, October 20, 2011

The 3.6 percent COLA raise in Social Security might be of little comfort when rates for Medicare Part B premiums that cover doctor visits are announced by federal officials. The premiums are automatically deducted from Social Security payments and most likely will take a good bite out of the newfound cost-of-living increase. Even more disturbing for those who depend on Social Security is the “Chained Consumer Price Index” proposed by the U.S. senators who comprise the bipartisan Super Committee. In an effort to reduce the more than \$1 trillion deficit they have proposed calculating smaller increases in the cost of living which would cut expected Social Security benefits.

<http://www.delcotimes.com/articles/2011/10/20/opinion/doc4ea0cf491b1f7056840160.txt>

Ohio seniors: Don't fall for drug industry scare tactics
Cleveland.com
October 21, 2011

Ohio retirees need to know the truth about a new, \$1.6 million advertising campaign that aims to scare seniors with misleading claims about Medicare prescription drug costs. Organized by the conservative American Action Network, this national campaign is a thinly veiled attempt by the big drug companies to keep a loophole in federal law that results in taxpayers paying billions more per year than necessary for Medicare prescriptions for low-income seniors. As part of its deficit-reduction plan, the administration wants to save Medicare \$135 billion over 10 years by requiring pharmaceutical companies to lower prescription costs for low-income seniors. In other words, the big drug companies want to block us from ending their sweetheart deal created in 2003.

http://blog.cleveland.com/letters/2011/10/ohio_seniors_dont_fall_for_dru.html

Advocates for Seniors Fight Potential CPI Shift
David Harrison
CQ Today
October 21, 2011

Under the chained Consumer Price Index, the government takes into account the substitutions that consumers make when prices change. For instance, when a hard freeze drives up the price of oranges, people will turn to apples instead of paying more for oranges. The chained measure tends to calculate inflation rates that are a few tenths of a percent lower than the current rates. That means Social Security beneficiaries would see lower cost-of-living increases because those bumps are pegged to the government's inflation figures. According to CBO, moving to a chained

CPI would bring in \$217 billion over a decade, of which \$112 billion would be from lower Social Security payments and \$72 billion from higher tax revenue. That makes it unpalatable both to seniors groups such as the AARP and to anti-tax advocates such as Americans for Tax Reform, which opposes the measure unless its cost is offset with tax cuts.

<http://www.cq.com/doc/news-3967448>

Medicare

Medicare can do more to safeguard identity

Janet Kidd Stewart
The Chicago Tribune
October 21, 2011

To prevent Medicare participants against identity theft there has been legislation to remove Social Security numbers from Medicare cards. Unfortunately, this type of legislation has been languishing in Congress for years. A current version — the Medicare Identity Theft Prevention Act of 2011 — was referred in April to a House Ways and Means subcommittee. Until legislation preventing identity theft through Medicare is passed be cautious when giving out your Medicare information.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/yourmoney/sc-cons-1020-journey-20111021,0,2651333.story>

Medicare Program for Doctor Groups Gets Looser Rules

Louise Radnofsky
The Wall Street Journal
October 21, 2011

The Obama administration on Thursday loosened the rules for a new program that encourages doctors and hospitals to coordinate care for groups of Medicare patients, after providers complained preliminary guidelines were unworkable. Under the new guidelines, providers have less risk of losing money if they choose to take part. The administration gave them a new option of participating in the program without taking on the risk of paying a share of the losses if they end up raising costs rather than pushing them down. Participants that take on the risk will win a bigger cut of any savings they achieve.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204485304576643111167270254.html>

Lifestyle

Heart failure admissions decline in U.S.

Nicole Blazek
The Clinical Advisor
October 21, 2011

Data from a fee-for-service Medicare analysis, shows that U.S. heart failure (HF) hospitalizations decreased by 29.5% during the past decade. Factors contributing to the declines include lower incidence of heart failure risk factors, modest improvements in BP control and better use of evidence-based therapies the researchers suggested, noting that a shift towards managing heart failure in outpatient settings may also have made a difference.

<http://www.clinicaladvisor.com/heart-failure-admissions-decline-in-us/article/214863/>

Politics

Senate unveils next piece of Obama jobs bill

Andrew Taylor

San Francisco Chronicle

October 21, 2011

Member of the Senate unveiled the next piece of Obama's failed \$447 billion jobs measure to get a vote in the Senate: a \$60 billion investment in infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges. However, the infrastructure package figures to be unanimously opposed by Republicans and a handful of Democrats over its stimulus-style spending and tax surcharge on the very wealthy. A test vote on the measure will come after the Senate returns from vacation next month. The legislation would provide an immediate \$50 billion investment in America's roads, bridges and airports, and transit systems and establish a \$10 billion national infrastructure bank to leverage private and public capital for longer-term infrastructure projects.

[http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2011/10/21/national/w005728D15.DTL#ixzz1bROtQMxS)

[bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2011/10/21/national/w005728D15.DTL#ixzz1bROtQMxS](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2011/10/21/national/w005728D15.DTL#ixzz1bROtQMxS)

Social Security

Social Security Checks and the Working Retired

Kerry Hannon

Forbes

October 21, 2011

Along with a 3.6% COLA increase, the Social Security Administration also announced that it had bumped up limits on the amount early retirees can earn without seeing a cut in their Social Security checks. If you're relying on cash flow from Social Security and supplementing that with part-time paid work, you need to be aware of the SSA's earnings limits to avoid any surprises.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kerryhannon/2011/10/20/social-security-checks-and-the-working-retired/>