

Alliance Clips and Retiree News December 7, 2011

Alliance Mentions

Social Security, Medicare advocate: Programs not in crisis

Leader Telegram

McLean Bennett

December 6, 2011

Billy Feitlinger, executive director of the Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans, spoke at an informational forum on Medicare in Eau Claire. There he refuted the claims by Representative Paul Ryan that Medicare is broke. "It's a great program. It does not have a crisis, a financial crisis," he said. He explained that his organization believed Medicare should be funded by letting the tax breaks for the wealthy expire. "Our organization believes very strongly that health care is a right, not a privilege," Feitlinger said.

http://www.leadertelegram.com/local_news/story/article_13f8be20-2094-11e1-82c2-0019bb2963f4.html

Medicare

House Republicans shoot down hopes for permanent Medicare payment 'fix'

The Hill

Julian Pecquet

December 6, 2011

The American Medical Association had hoped that the 21-member Republican Doctor Caucus would come up with a permanent "doc fix." Unfortunately the caucus is unlikely to come up with anything more than a two year fix before the holidays. Without congressional action by year's end, physicians will see their Medicare payment rates cut nearly 30 percent on Jan. 1. Kicking the can down the road one year is expected to cost about \$21 billion, while a two-year "patch" would cost around \$38 billion. The two-year doc fix is expected to be packaged over the next few days with other must-pass legislation extending unemployment benefits and payroll tax cuts. But the two chambers don't see eye to eye on how to pay for it.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/healthwatch/medicare/197621-house-republicans-shoot-down-physicians-hopes-for-permanent-medicare-fix>

Gingrich would implement Ryan plan

The Hill

Sam Baker

December 6, 2011

Earlier in his campaign former House Speaker Newt Gingrich criticized the Ryan Budget plan, which cost him in the polls with Republican voters. In an interview with Glen Beck, Gingrich stood by his criticism, but also said he would implement a number of the provisions in the Ryan Plan, the only difference being he would not force them on everyone. "...I would implement the Medicare reforms that Paul Ryan wants, I would implement them next year as an optional choice and I would allow people to have the option to choose premium support and then have freedom to negotiate with their doctor or their hospital in a way that would increase their ability to manage costs without being involved," Gingrich said. "I think that's a very large scale experiment," he said. "But I think you could migrate people toward it." Ryan's proposal would convert the current Medicare program by using its federal funding for subsidies that seniors would use to purchase private insurance. Other versions of the "premium support" model would allow seniors to choose between private coverage and traditional Medicare.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/healthwatch/politics-elections/197463-gingrich-ironically-supports-ryan-medicare-plan>

Politics

Republicans split on Democratic plan to extend payroll tax cut

The Washington Post

Rosalind S. Helderman

December 6, 2011

There is a major rift in the GOP base on whether or not to support the Democrats' payroll tax cuts. For many Republicans this is a no brainer, but they are facing resistance from Tea Party members, who oppose this on the grounds that it is simply a short term fix. Republicans also oppose the surtax that would be levied on the rich. Republicans must toe a careful line with this issue; they do not want to appear to only favor tax breaks from the rich and not the middle class as well. A decision will have to be made. "I think what the public understands is that Congress has been unwilling to make any tough decisions. We've had our cake and eaten it, too, for so long," said Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.). "And this is another example of not being able to say no."

http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/republicans-split-on-democratic-plan-to-extend-payroll-tax-cut/2011/12/06/gIQAB0AsaO_story.html

Barack Obama Economic Speech: President Declares American Middle Class In Jeopardy, Outlines Populist Economic Vision

Huffington Post

Ken Thomas and Ben Feller

December 6, 2011

In a speech President Obama delivered in Osawatimie Kansas, he declared the middle class in jeopardy. "This is a make-or-break moment for the middle class and all those who are fighting to get into the middle class," Obama said. "Throughout the country, it's sparked protests and political movements, from the tea party to the people who've been occupying the streets of New York and other cities." Obama championed the idea of "building a nation where we're all better off." His speech served two main purposes, where two different Obamas were present. The first was that of the campaigner, full of loft and reclamation of American values. The second was the governing Obama, who recited his familiar jobs agenda, his feud with Congress over extending a Social Security tax cut, even his fight to get his consumer watchdog confirmed. Republicans are in for a fight come 2012.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/06/barack-obama-payroll-tax-cuts_n_1132050.html

Labor

Labor union says email withdrawing Obama endorsement a hoax

The Hill

Meghashyam Mali

December 7, 2011

An email was sent to reporters late Tuesday night claiming that the Service Employees International Union, one of the largest unions in the nation, was pulling its November endorsement of President Obama. SEIU came out today to say that email was wholly untrue, and it was a hoax. "We stand by our November 16, 2011 endorsement of President Obama as part of a broader '99 percent' strategy to create good jobs now, end devastating cuts to Medicare and Medicaid and require everyone to pay their fair share," said SEIU spokesman Mark McCullough in a statement released early Wednesday.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/197705-labor-union-says-email-withdrawing-obama-endorsement-a-hoax>

No Clear Path on Jobless Benefits

Roll Call

Meredith Shiner and Jessica Brady

December 7, 2011

There is growing concern amongst lawmakers concerning the extension of unemployment benefits. Democrats are demanding a solution be reached while the Republicans are sending a more mixed message. Some are pushing small tweaks, others complete overhauls and still others are content with simply renewing the program as is. Never the less, there is not clear path forward. Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid has threatened to keep members here until Christmas if that is what it takes. With unemployment still hovering around nine percent,

unemployment benefits are critically important to a number of Americans and drastic changes to the program could have equally drastic results.

http://www.rollcall.com/issues/57_70/No-Clear-Path-on-Jobless-Benefits-210835-1.html?pos=htmbtxt

Liberal Groups Take Up Occupy Mantle in D.C.

Roll Call

Ambreen Ali

December 7, 2011

DC occupiers stormed the Capitol in an attempt to ‘occupy’ Congress. The protest was targeted at Republican lawmakers in support of Obama’s jobs bill. While the DC protest has gain labor support it is not completely unified with Occupy Wall Street, but it is a good example of how progressive organizations have capitalized on the Occupy Movement. “Occupy Wall Street is the proper message. ... We’re saying to legislators, ‘You’ve heard this message. Now do your job,’” said Elbridge James, board president of Progressive Maryland, a group that advocates for working families. No one can deny that the Occupy Movement had stirred up attention for the ‘99 percent,’ even if that attention is more among voters than legislators.

http://www.rollcall.com/issues/57_70/Liberal_Groups_Take_Up_Occupy_Mantle-210837-1.html?pos=htmbtxt