

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006 • 202.637.5399

www.retiredamericans.org • aracommunications@retiredamericans.org

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Join Sen. Harkin for a Tele-Town Hall about Social Security Legislation on Monday

Sen. **Tom Harkin** (D-IA) recently introduced the Strengthen Social Security Act, S.567. Instead of offering a cold, calculated benefit cut like the chained CPI, this bill would actually increase Social Security Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA's) by an average of \$800! On Monday, May 20th at 3:30 EST, the Alliance is holding a special tele-town hall briefing with Sen. Harkin. On the call, he will talk about the Strengthen Social Security Act and other efforts to protect retirement security. In addition, we will talk about Alliance activities happening in your state and how you can get involved to protect retirement security. For more information, and to participate on Monday, go to <http://tinyurl.com/a9ctrzm>. Click on <http://tinyurl.com/a2gxhtl> for more on the chained CPI. For the Alliance letter in support of Harkin's bill, go to <http://tinyurl.com/cnpxaa>.

“With the help of Alliance activists, we can build the public support for strengthening Social Security and make sure we are not part of the last generation to retire,” said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance.

Mr. Coyle represented the Alliance at a “Kitchen Cabinet” meeting this week with another U.S. Senator, **Bernie Sanders** (I-VT), regarding the safeguarding of Social Security for current and future retirees. The Alliance joined with other leading seniors groups in a robust strategy discussion.

Affordable Care Act Repeal Votes Have Cost More than \$52 Million

The House voted 229-195 on Thursday to pass H.R. 45, legislation repealing the Affordable Care Act. Thursday was at least the 43rd day since Republicans took over the House that they have devoted time to vote on bills to repeal or defund the 2010 legislation designed to provide health coverage for the uninsured. Since 2011, Republicans have spent no less than 15 percent of their time on the House floor on repeal in some way. Based on time spend to operate the Capitol, the GOP anti-health crusade has so far cost American taxpayers a total of \$52.4 million (source: House Minority Leader **Nancy Pelosi's** office). To read more, see the *New York Times* article at <http://tinyurl.com/aqwqthj>. For a tally of the Thursday vote, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ahxedgp>.

“This issue has already been considered and decided. Despite yesterday's House vote, it is the law of the land. It is time to move on,” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance.

Obituary: Washington State's Will Parry, a Giant in the Seniors Political Movement

Beloved President Emeritus and Editor of the *Retiree Advocate* in Washington State, **Will Parry**, died peacefully on Monday afternoon after an extended period of illness. Will was a warrior for economic and social justice for more than seven decades and was widely known, loved and respected. He was with the Washington State Alliance since its inception, and had been with the National Council of Senior Citizens before that. Labor, community and religious leaders considered him the heart, soul, and intellectual leader of the Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action

(PSARA), and he will be sorely missed. A memorial will take place at the Labor Temple in Seattle at the end of June. Donations in his name may be made to Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action at 2800 1st Ave. #262, Seattle, WA 98121 to continue his work.

Fees for Medical Procedures Vary Inexplicably from Hospital to Hospital

There are often huge, discrepancies in fees hospitals charge for the same procedure. Count **Jonathan Blum**, Medicare's deputy administrator, among those who don't understand the logic the hospitals use to arrive at those fees.

"It doesn't make sense," Blum said when asked to explain the reason. He noted that the higher charges don't necessarily reflect better care. Even the American Hospital Association calls the current billing system, "complex and bewildering," says *USA Today*.

To bring some clarity to the pricing, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services published the costs for 100 common procedures at 3,337 hospitals (<http://www.cms.gov>). The government hopes publishing comparative costs will promote competition and lower prices, especially as the Affordable Care Act begins taking effect.

"Geographical location; the complexity of the ailment; the length of the hospital stay; and the cost of running a teaching hospital are all factors," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer-of the Alliance. "But even if all the known factors are taken into account, the numbers are mystifying."

According to the Associated Press (<http://tinyurl.com/aqu9ubb>), the wide discrepancy in prices also cannot be totally explained by factoring in the cost of treating older, sicker or indigent patients. AP found that, exclusive of the doctors' fees, the average charge for a joint replacement ranged from about \$5,300 in Ada, Okla., to \$223,000 in Monterey Park, Calif.

Private insurers, Medicare and Medicaid negotiate their own reimbursement rates with hospitals and doctors. The uninsured are often carried on the hospital's books as being charged the full rate, but that amount is negotiated based on the patient's ability to pay, and the truly indigent don't pay at all.

Alliance Activists Lobby in Connecticut, Illinois, California

Alliance chapters in Connecticut, Illinois, and California have had Lobby Days this week. In Hartford on Tuesday, the Connecticut Alliance held its second annual "Senior Day at the Capitol." Over 130 activists, their families and allies were in Hartford to meet with their elect officials. Participants then disbursed throughout the Capitol to address seniors' issues. The day ended with a well-attended press event. Speakers included Ms. Easterling; Lieutenant Governor **Nancy Wyman**; Speaker of the House **Brendon Sharkey**; House Majority Leader **Joe Aresimowicz**; and a host of other government officials and labor leaders.

Alliance activists in Illinois also lobbied their legislators at their State Capitol in Springfield on Tuesday. The local ABC affiliate covered the seniors' quest for home health care funding - as well as their advocacy on other issues, such as Medicare - at <http://tinyurl.com/anarvz8>.

In addition, hundreds of California Alliance (CARA) members will be meeting with their State Assembly members and Senators in their district offices around the state today.