

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Paul Ryan's Latest Budget: Not New and Not Improved!

House Budget Committee Chairman **Paul Ryan** (R-WI) unveiled a Republican budget on Tuesday that once again proposes privatizing Medicare and turning it into a voucher system, while lowering tax rates on corporations and the wealthy. The vouchers would replace the guaranteed benefits of Medicare but would not keep up with costs, and seniors would be out more and more money every year. The plan would also turn Medicaid into a block-grant program. "This budget - Ryan's 3rd edition - is not new and it's not improved," said Ohio Alliance President **Norm Wernet**.

Please sign the petition expressing your disapproval of the Paul Ryan budget here: <http://bit.ly/YdAmr6>.

Alliance member **Diane Fleming** spoke out about the budget on Wednesday at a Capitol Hill event with the House Progressive Caucus. The United Airlines retiree, who worked for 39 years as a reservations agent and in ticket sales as a member of the International Association of Machinists, spelled out what the Ryan budget would mean for seniors. Members of the House in attendance included Reps. **Keith Ellison** (MN), **Raúl Grijalva** (AZ), **Jim McDermott** (WA), **Barbara Lee** (CA), **Jan Schakowsky** (IL), **Mark Pocan** (WI) and **Maxine Waters** (CA).

"Moving to a voucher system for Medicare, as the Ryan plan outlines, is just a way of cutting Medicare. It shifts health care costs onto retirees, most of whom absolutely cannot afford it and wouldn't get the health care they need," said Ms. Fleming.

The plan once again calls for the repeal of Obamacare, something Republicans have tried and failed to do more than 30 times. For more on what it does, go to <http://tinyurl.com/bethjol>.

Two Social Security Bills Favorable for Seniors

The Alliance sent two letters to the Hill this week in support of Social Security bills that would improve seniors' lives. Sen. **Tom Harkin's** (D-IA) Strengthening Social Security Act of 2013, S. 567, is similar to Harkin's Rebuild America Act, but NOT identical. It extends the Social Security Trust Fund through 2049; lifts the cap on earnings subject to the Social Security tax over a 5-year period beginning in 2014 (the previous legislation removed it over 10 years); and immediately applies the CPI-E. The changes would increase average benefits by about \$65 per month, or \$800 per year. As before, those now contributing beyond the 2013 cap would get an increase in benefits - though that formula has changed. The Alliance letter is at <http://tinyurl.com/cnpxaa>.

Rep. **Peter DeFazio's** (D-OR) Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act, H.R. 1030, calls for adoption of the CPI-E, a more accurate measure of inflation for seniors. That letter is at <http://tinyurl.com/bmjmgfu>.

“These are two great pieces of Social Security legislation that benefit seniors, and they come in an environment where we are so used to hearing the calls of ‘cut, cut, cut!’” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

Income Inequality, Tied to Lower Life Expectancy, Has Policy Implications

Those who make less tend to live shorter lives. Therefore, raising the Medicare and Social Security eligibility ages — currently 65 for Medicare and moving toward 67 for full Social Security benefits — means fewer benefits for lower-income workers. *The Washington Post* elaborated on this fact on Sunday in a story analyzing data from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that compares county health rankings by focusing on two Florida counties of varying wealth: Putnam and St. Johns. Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/bmy23vy>. “It is important to know the facts, so that our political foes don’t use misinformation as a way of raising the retirement age,” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance.

New York Times Features Wisconsin Alliance President Leon Burzynski

The New York Times, in a piece about working after retirement, focused on **Leon Burzynski**, President of the Wisconsin Alliance. To read about Burzynski's own retirement experience and see his quote and picture, go to <http://tinyurl.com/bqo4nxf>.

Florida Alliance (FLARA) Hosts its Legislative Conference

The FLARA Legislative Conference, held in Tallahassee this week, included two press conferences on Monday – one highlighting the “silent crisis” in affordable housing for seniors, and the other rejecting House Bill 7011, which would strip away Florida public workers’ defined benefit pension plan. Speakers at these events included State Sens. **Joe Abruzzo**, **Maria Sachs**, and **Dwight Bullard**; State Reps. **Mark Pafford**, **Dave Kerner**, and **Ricardo Rangel**; **Steve Protulis**, Executive Director of the Elderly Housing Development and Operations Corp. (EHDOC); **Tom Randle** of Leading Age Florida; **Doug Martin**, President of Florida AFSCME; former State Sen. **Ron Silver** of Miami; and **Daneen Regna**, a member of FLARA and a retired Florida educator. In addition, the two-day conference featured **Eva Dominguez** from the Alliance’s Department of Government and Political Affairs; State Sen. **Jeff Clemens**; and State Reps. **Joe Gibbons** and **Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda**.

Obituary: Stephen Skvara, SOAR and Alliance Member, 1947-2013

Alliance member **Stephen Skvara** of Valparaiso, Indiana, age 65, passed away on Tuesday, February 19. Mr. Skvara retired from LTV Steel Mill and was an active member of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (S.O.A.R.). Quoting USW District 7’s statement, “His voice was loudest in Chicago when he stood up at a 2007 AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Debate Forum to ask a question that was nationally televised to more than one-million, plus thousands who were seated at the event to say: ‘Every day of my life, I sit at the kitchen table across from the woman who devoted 36 years of her life to my family and I can’t afford her health care. What’s wrong with America and what will you do to change it?’” More at the blog of fellow SOAR member **Charlie Averill** (<http://tinyurl.com/acley76>). Memorial donations may be made to Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees, 5 Gateway Center, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.