

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Human Chain Effort: A Smashing Success in More than 50 U.S. Cities!

On July 2nd, the Alliance's Human Chains events, designed to stop the chained CPI cut to Social Security benefits, took place in more than 50 cities and included more than 2,800 participants. Alliance members raised awareness of the chained CPI to many people who had never heard of it and led an effort to send over 108,000 emails to members of Congress. Activists' voices were heard not only in the halls of Congress, but in towns and cities across the country. The idea for the Human Chain originated with the California Alliance, and the effort paid off, leading to more than 110 press hits nationally.

"Thank you to those who braved the rain and heat, lending your time and energy to this important effort," said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. "This month is critical in bringing more members of Congress onboard opposing these cuts. Some elected officials continue to call for unnecessary cuts through a chained consumer price index or chained CPI. This would mean if you're 65 years old today, you would lose more than \$650 a year when you reach 75 and more than \$1,000 a year when you reach 85. Put simply, some cuts never heal!"

The events included clever refrains. For instance, as the AFL-CIO's blog noted, more than 30 Indiana activists formed a human chain holding a red-and-white paper chain outside the U.S. Federal Building in Fort Wayne and chanted, "It's time for us to just say no/Chained CPI has got to go. We're smart enough to see the lie/So don't you chain our CPI."

In dozens of cities across the nation, Alliance members, other senior advocates, community and faith allies formed human chains outside lawmakers' offices and federal buildings to protest the cuts in Social Security that a proposed "chained" CPI would bring. Many of the actions were aimed at lawmakers who back the Social Security cuts, but others included those who are fighting to protect Social Security. The South Carolina Alliance received widespread press attention for their protests in Conway and N. Charleston. The California Alliance led two large events, one with 350 activists - including Rep. **Maxine Waters** (D-CA) - in Los Angeles, and one with 500 members and allies in San Francisco. The Texas Alliance formed a chain outside Rep. **Jeb Hensarling's** (R-TX) office in Dallas. Attendees of all ages also chained up outside Sen. **Mark Warner's** (D-VA) Richmond office to urge him to oppose the chained CPI cuts.

In addition to Rep. Waters, many other members of the U.S House and Senate joined the effort. In Rhode Island, Sen. **Sheldon Whitehouse**, as well as Reps. **David Cicilline** and **Jim Langevin**, took part in the festivities. Reps. **Brian Higgins** and **Daniel Maffei** in Lackawanna and Syracuse, New York, respectively, also participated. Reps. **Dina Titus** in Las Vegas and **André Carson** in Indianapolis appeared at the events in those cities. For more on the July 2 events, including news articles and video footage, go to <http://tinyurl.com/pd8pbsz>. Go to <http://bit.ly/1dnCEs1> for photographs. To read the AFL-CIO blog's coverage of the events, go to <http://tinyurl.com/mke7car>.

Republicans May Demand Earned Benefit Cuts in Exchange for Raising Debt Ceiling

According to recent reports, Republicans in the U.S. House are in the process of preparing for this fall's debt ceiling showdown by creating a "menu" of benefit cuts that they plan to demand in exchange for raising the debt ceiling. These demands are based largely on the ultra-conservative budget proposed by Rep. **Paul Ryan** (R-WI). According to *National Journal*, possibilities being considered include implementing chained CPI; means testing Social Security; gutting Medicaid by turning it into a block grant program; and privatizing Social Security and Medicare. President **Obama** has said that he will refuse to negotiate with Republicans over the debt ceiling limit.

"Although this showdown is likely still several months away, we must remain vigilant against any proposed cuts to Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid," said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "We will not allow far right politicians to hold our vital benefit programs hostage to their irresponsible threat to shut down the government."

Tell Congress: Co-Sponsor Rockefeller-Waxman Bill to Reduce High Drug Costs

Under current law, the Medicare program is not allowed to negotiate with drug companies to get the lowest rate on prescription drugs. This amounts to a massive windfall for big pharmaceutical companies at the expense of taxpayers and Medicare beneficiaries. In response to this unjust situation, Sen. **Jay Rockefeller** (D-WV) and Rep. **Henry Waxman** (D-CA) have introduced the Medicare Drug Savings Act, S. 740 in the U.S. Senate and H.R. 1588 in the U.S. House of Representatives. This legislation would eliminate the special deal for brand-name drug manufacturers, saving the federal government more than \$140 billion over ten years. That is money that should be used to help all Medicare beneficiaries, not to line the overstuffed pockets of big pharma. Please click <http://tinyurl.com/q3jnwer> to ask your Senators and Representatives to co-sponsor the Medicare Drug Savings Act.

Federal Budget Forecast Shows Smaller Deficit for this Year

The midseason review from the White House Office of Management and Budget has projected that the federal budget deficit for this fiscal year will be \$759 billion, which is considerably smaller than it has been in recent years. The review also found that the budget deficit will continue to shrink through the year 2018. The decrease in the deficit is the result of several factors, including the improving economy and increased tax revenue. Although the spending cuts imposed by sequestration are also a factor, this year's budget deficit is projected to be much lower than last year's even if the cuts are repealed. Other recent projections, such as those from the Congressional Budget Office, have shown similar findings. For more on the budget, read the *Washington Post's* write up at <http://tinyurl.com/mh3htyn>.

"Given this news, it is clearer than ever that those misguided individuals who advocate gutting earned benefit programs can no longer use the budget deficit as an excuse," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "It is not surprising that deficits were high in a time of economy instability, and are now coming back down as the economy improves. Our nation's fiscal health clearly does not require any cuts to benefit programs. The reckless across-the-board cuts imposed by sequestration are also unnecessary and should be repealed."