

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## Seniors Join Pro-Retiree Members of Congress to Protest Benefit Cuts

On Wednesday, over a hundred Alliance activists joined with several leading members of the U.S. Senate and House for an energetic press event on Capitol Hill. The event was headlined by Sen. **Bernie Sanders** (I-VT), and also featured remarks by Sens. **Elizabeth Warren** (D-MA), **Jack Reed** (D-RI), and **Al Franken** (D-MN); as well as Reps. **Jan Schakowsky** (D-IL), **Keith Ellison** (D-MN), **Ted Deutch** (D-FL), **Peter DeFazio** (D-OR) and **David Cicilline** (D-RI). All of the lawmakers strongly denounced the idea of cutting Social Security benefits by switching to the Chained CPI cost-of-living adjustment formula. They made it clear that they will protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid from any cuts, so that the programs remain strong for both the current generation of retirees and also our children and grandchildren. They also drove home the point that the wealthiest among us and corporations need to pay their fair share.

Three Alliance members spoke at the event, explaining the heartbreaking consequences that cuts to Social Security would mean for them. “I would like to extend special thank-you’s to the Alliance members who spoke on Wednesday,” said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Regional Board member **Marty Alvarado** of Dallas, Texas, who worked in the electronics industry; **Jody Weinreich** of Allentown, Penn., who worked in the garment industry; and **Marty Walsh** of Glendale, Missouri, who worked in the insurance industry, were all quite eloquent in their remarks. They brought tears to the eyes of many who were in attendance. I was very proud to stand strong against earned benefit cuts alongside Senator Sanders and so many of our stalwart allies.”

To watch a video of the event, go to <http://tinyurl.com/dxknfbd>. For Facebook photos, go to <http://tinyurl.com/cmepv9e>. To see the updated Nevada Alliance state web site – featuring Nevada Alliance leaders and Alliance staff with U.S. Senate Majority Leader **Harry Reid** on Wednesday, go to [www.nevadaretiredamericans.org](http://www.nevadaretiredamericans.org).

The day before the event, AFL-CIO President **Richard Trumka** addressed Alliance activists, thanking them for their role in the 2012 elections and for their work to stop the Chained CPI.

## Moderate Democratic Senators Come Out Against Chained CPI

Several Democratic Senators from swing states, who are running for reelection in 2014, have declared their opposition to the Chained CPI. Sens. **Kay Hagan** (NC), **Mark Begich** (AK), and **Mark Pryor** (AR) have co-sponsored a Senate resolution against the Chained CPI (S.Con.Res. 15). Sen. **Jeanne Shaheen** (D-NH) also opposes the benefit cut. Currently, eight of the fourteen Democrats running for reelection in 2014 have stated that they will not support the Chained CPI. To read a Huffington Post write up of the story, go to <http://tinyurl.com/cuxmu7q>.

“This is clear evidence that politicians all over the country are getting the message that voters across the political spectrum overwhelmingly oppose Chained CPI,” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. “We urge our members to keep hammering that message home. Call your members

of Congress and urge them to come out against Chained CPI. If they have already done the right thing, call to thank them for their support.”

### **Senate Passes Older Americans Month Resolution**

The U.S. Senate has passed a resolution to designate May 2013 as Older Americans Month. The resolution, which was sponsored by Sen. **Bill Nelson** (D-FL) and co-sponsored by Sen. **Susan Collins** (R-ME), Sen. **Christopher Coons** (D-MA), and Sen. Sanders, passed by unanimous consent on May 9<sup>th</sup>. The resolution points out that seniors rely on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for financial security and high quality healthcare. It also stresses the important role that seniors play within their communities by being sources of experience and knowledge. The resolution encourages the people of the United States to emphasize the importance of seniors and provide them with opportunities to share their wisdom and skills with the community. To view the resolution, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ca4rfed>.

### **Big Pharma Gives \$1.57 billion to CEOs, Charges Medicare Exorbitant Drug Costs**

Over the last ten years, the 11 largest pharmaceutical companies have given their CEOs a combined \$1.57 billion in compensation, according to a new report from Health Care for American Now (HCAN.) The report found that the pay of the CEOs has increased considerably over the course of those ten years, particularly after the Medicare prescription drug program went into effect in 2006. Under the drug program, Medicare is not allowed to negotiate the prices of the medications it buys, which has led to a windfall for pharmaceutical companies. Sen. **Jay Rockefeller** (D-WV) has introduced legislation that would allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices. To read the HCAN report, go to <http://tinyurl.com/buoxjdu>. “This is a disgrace,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Medicare is supposed to be an earned benefit program to provide seniors with health care, not a program to further enrich the overflowing pockets of wealthy CEOs. Yet the same politicians who will not allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices have the audacity to claim Medicare is costing too much money and wrongly insist we need to cut benefits. It is time to close the prescription drug loophole and allow Medicare to negotiate for cheaper prices.”

### **“Observational” Hospital Stays Continue to Leave Seniors with Big Bills**

Medicare recipients who need more time to recuperate after a hospital visit are entitled to a 20-day stay in a nursing home, as long as their hospitalization lasted at least 3 days. However, many seniors in this situation are being forced to pay for their own nursing home care because one or more days of their hospital stay were classified as “observational.” Medicare officials say that recipients must be “admitted patients” at the hospital for at least three days to qualify for nursing home care. Since hospitals are not required to tell patients when they are classified as “under observation,” seniors and their families often have no idea that Medicare will not be covering their nursing home costs. Since we last wrote about the issue in February, 14 seniors represented by the Center for Medicare Advocacy have filed a lawsuit for Medicare to eliminate the “observational” label. To read a *USA Today* write up of the story, go to <http://tinyurl.com/cozpdpa> .

“Medicare must swiftly end this unfair practice,” said Mr. Coyle. “Seniors and their families, who are already under a lot of emotional and financial stress, should not be faced with crippling nursing home bills because of a technicality that hospitals are not even required to inform them about.”