

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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July 2 Human Chain Events now Just Around the Corner

The Alliance will be hosting more than 45 “Human Chain against the Chained CPI” events on July 2. For a list of events, including a map that allows you to find an event near you by typing in your zip code, go to <http://tinyurl.com/pd8pbsz>. Highlights for a few of the events: The “Human Chain” in Providence, Rhode Island will feature Sen. **Sheldon Whitehouse** and Reps. **Jim Langevin** and **David Cicilline**, and the chain in Indianapolis will feature Rep. **André Carson**. The event in Albuquerque, New Mexico will feature Rep. **Michelle Lujan Grisham**. “The chained CPI is a cold, calculated benefit cut to our Social Security - and some cuts never heal!” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance.

Alliance members who are unable to attend an event in person are urged to participate in the day’s action by calling or writing to Congress. Call Congress on July 2 at 202/224-3121 and say, “I oppose the chained CPI benefit cut to Social Security.” Encourage your Member of Congress to co-sponsor the resolution rejecting the chained CPI benefit cut – in the House, the Cicilline Resolution, H.Con.Res. 34; and in the Senate, the **Harkin** Resolution, H.Con.Res. 15.

Supreme Court’s “Defense of Marriage Act” Decision to Affect Gay Seniors Greatly

On Wednesday, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a key provision of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), meaning that the spousal benefits of Social Security and Medicare will be extended to married, same-sex couples. The Administration on Aging estimates that there are between 1.75 million and 4 million Americans over the age of 60 who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). Many LGBT seniors who live in states with legalized same sex marriage have wed. Until Wednesday, due to DOMA, these seniors did not have the same federal benefits and protections as heterosexual couples. This had particularly broad implications with regard to Social Security. The Social Security spousal retirement benefit allows the partner in a couple with the lower earnings record to receive an amount equal to 50% of their spouse’s Social Security benefits. The survivor benefit allows surviving spouses to receive Social Security equivalent to what their spouse with a higher earnings record received.

LGBT couples had also faced discrimination in the federal tax code. Since their marriages were not federally recognized, they could not claim the tax benefits reserved for married couples. Inheriting the estate of a deceased partner was often more complex and costly than for heterosexual couples.

In another civil rights ruling the same day, the Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed an appeal over same-sex marriage on jurisdictional grounds, ruling that private parties do not have “standing” to defend California’s voter-approved ballot measure barring gay and lesbian couples from state-sanctioned wedlock.

“I am pleased that married gay and lesbian seniors will have the same rights as other seniors when it comes to not only Social Security, Medicare, and many tax issues – but also overall fairness,” said

Edward F. Coyle, Executive Director of the Alliance. “The Alliance wholeheartedly supports extending the same rights for older LGBT couples that this country does for older, straight couples.”

Voting Rights Decision a Major Blow to Civil Rights of Minorities

The Supreme Court made other decisions this week as well. In addition to landmark gay rights cases, they ruled on voters’ rights. On Tuesday, the Supreme Court struck down a central part of the Voting Rights Act, invalidating crucial protections passed by Congress in 1965 and renewed four times in the decades since. The sharply divided decision will significantly reduce the federal government’s role in overseeing voting laws in areas with a history of discrimination against African-Americans and other minorities.

“The decision turns back the clock and makes it much easier to discriminate,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “There is still so much to be done. We hope Congress will act quickly to remedy this terrible, wrong decision.”

Alliance Members Join Leader Pelosi, Secretary Sebelius at Capitol Hill Press Event

On Wednesday on Capitol Hill, Alliance members and political leaders celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling on the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act and marked the countdown - fewer than 100 days left - until the next provision of the law is implemented on October 1, 2013. The event noted the re-launch of web sites www.HealthCare.Gov and www.CuidadoDeSalud.Gov, which offer in English and Spanish, respectively, new tools that will help Americans understand their choices and select the coverage that best suits their needs when open enrollment in the new Health Insurance Marketplace begins October 1.

The event featured U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary **Kathleen Sebelius**; House Minority Leader **Nancy Pelosi**; Minority Whip **Steny Hoyer**, Assistant Democratic Leader **James Clyburn**, and a score of other Representatives. Maryland/DC Alliance members **Annie Leach**, **Audrey Bell**, and **Minnie Jacobs**, all of Suitland, Maryland, joined the government officials on stage. Ms. Leach spoke about taken advantage of a free wellness check-up; initially she had received a bill, but an ally, **Tara Maxwell**, informed the doctor on her behalf that the Affordable Care Act covered it. For video footage of the event, go to <http://tinyurl.com/op2rqau>. For photos, go to <http://tinyurl.com/q38pgfj>.

Chained CPI or another Topic on Your Mind? Write a Letter to the Editor, Win a Pen!

With the July 2 Human Chain events fast approaching, Alliance members have an excellent opportunity to write a letter to the editor in their local paper. If you want others to know about the chained CPI or another topic, take a moment and write that letter. If it is published, the Alliance will send you a free, union-made “Retirees with the Write Stuff” pen. Most recently, **Edward Corrigan**, **Teresa Ewbank**, **Lynda Fainter**, **Gary Hall**, **Janice Laue**, **Bob Laurence**, **Jewel Littenberg**, **Al Mumm**, **Lester Newton**, **William Stevens**, and **Ron Thompson** contributed to their local papers. Please e-mail aracommunications@retiredamericans.org if you have had a letter published. “Letters to the editor are a cost-effective way to get our message out,” said Mr. Burks.

The next issue of the Friday Alert will be published on July 12. Enjoy the Fourth of July holiday!