

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Why Summertime Heat is Especially Dangerous for Seniors

Extreme summer heat causes thousands of heat-related illnesses in the U.S. each year, and kills more people than hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes combined. With the dramatic heat wave currently gripping so much of the U.S., seniors have been especially vulnerable recently. According to *The Huffington Post*, this is largely because the body's ability to regulate temperature through blood circulation and sweat glands tends to decline with age. Bodies of older adults also contain far less water than a younger person's, and older brains don't recognize thirst as easily, making them more likely to get dehydrated. In addition, many seniors have health problems that can increase their risk of hyperthermia (the body overheating). These include diseases like congestive heart failure, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD; trouble walking; and being overweight. To learn more, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lqszoj8>.

Alliance Members Tell Their Stories of High Drug, Health Care Costs

"Even though Medicare gives me access to health care and prescription drugs, it can still be a struggle to pay the copays and out-of-pocket costs," said **Leah Witherspoon**, a member of the Texas Alliance. "Instead of cuts to Medicare, like more means-testing or new home health co-pays, it seems to me we could and should save money for the Medicare program and taxpayers with policies like negotiating better prices on prescription drugs," the activist declared. The Alliance has begun collecting stories from our members of high prescription drug costs and other health care costs under Medicare. The stories will reinforce the fact that cuts to Medicare are the last thing this country needs. Tell us your story about these high costs by clicking on: <http://bit.ly/13FwE84>.

Democratic Senate Majority Hinges on a Few 2014 Races as First Forecasts Come in

Recent analysis from *New York Times* statistician and political prognosticator **Nate Silver** illustrates that control of the U.S. Senate after the 2014 midterm elections hangs in the balance. Currently, Democrats hold 54 Senate seats and Republicans hold 46. According to Silver, Republicans have about a 50% chance of gaining a Senate majority in 2014, in part due to the retirement of several long serving Democratic Senators. In North Carolina, where Sen. **Kay Hagan** (D) will face off against the winner of the Republican primary, Silver predicts a particularly close race. Other nail biters include Louisiana and Arkansas. Seniors are likely to play a major role in the outcome of these races, because of their high turn out during midterm elections. To read Silver's state-by-state analysis of the 2014 races, go to <http://tinyurl.com/pnkrefk>.

"Far right conservatives have controlled the House of Representatives for nearly three years," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "In that time, they have consistently obstructed government, refused to compromise, and voted for anti-senior policies like the destructive **Paul Ryan** budget. Seniors will fight to ensure that the Senate does not fall under the control of the same irresponsible team of ideologues."

Social Security Begins to Accept Same-Sex Marriage Claims

The Social Security Administration announced last Friday that it would begin accepting benefit claims related to same-sex marriage (<http://tinyurl.com/mlq3mvj>). The change comes after the Supreme Court ruled in June that the heart of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is unconstitutional, deciding that the federal government couldn't treat same-sex marriages approved by some states any differently than heterosexual marriages. Prior to the ruling, an individual in a same-sex marriage was unable to claim survivor benefits from Social Security when a spouse died.

In a bit of a twist, *The Hill* notes, the Supreme Court's recent DOMA ruling could also end up reducing the federal budget deficit despite the likely increase in Social Security spending, since most high-income married couples face a tax penalty when filing tax returns jointly. "The fact that the DOMA decision could help the deficit is just the icing on the cake," said **Barbara J.**

Easterling, President of the Alliance. "This was about civil rights and fairness, and I am glad to watch as the Social Security Administration reflects this change."

Contest Backfires on Social Security Privatizer

Pete Peterson, a conservative billionaire, is a major financier in the effort to dismantle, cut and privatize Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. According to the AFL-CIO blog, he and his foundation recently held a contest asking people to submit videos describing why it is important to "fix" the national debt, of which he and his foundation falsely claim, Social Security is a major contributor. However, "sometimes the best-laid plans for a propaganda campaign can go awry. The winner of the \$500 grand prize determined by popular vote on a website sponsored by Peterson came from the completely opposite side of his 'cut Social Security' argument."

The "Just Scrap the Cap" winning video features "rapping seniors rhyming their way to the conclusion that the way to shore up Social Security isn't through cuts or privatization but by scrapping the payroll tax cap on Social Security." That means billionaires and rich CEOs would pay the same Social Security tax that low- to upper-middle-income workers do. Currently, any income above the \$113,700 cap is exempt from the Social Security tax. Peterson's check went to **Robby Stern**, a member of the Alliance and of Social Security Works, the group that produced the video. Stern signed the check over to Social Security Works, saying, "We will use the \$500 to finance our education efforts and our Scrap the Cap campaign. We want to save Social Security from Peterson and his band of wealthy supporters." To see the winning video, go to <http://tinyurl.com/p2hvybp>.

Alliance Thanks Outgoing Senior Legislative Representative Sarah Byrne

After nearly six years as Senior Legislative Representative at the Alliance for Retired Americans, **Sarah Byrne** has moved on to join the Social Security Administration's Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs. During her time at the Alliance, Sarah worked tirelessly to educate Alliance members and the public on social insurance and was also the principal Alliance staffer working with the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations coalition. Her last day with the Alliance is today. "Sarah's extraordinary work advocating for retirement security and Social Security has greatly benefited not only our members but all older Americans, and she has been a favorite of her colleagues," said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "I know that thousands of Alliance members join me in congratulating Sarah on her outstanding work here, her bright future, and her continuing work at the Social Security Administration."