

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Happy 78th Birthday, Social Security!

On Wednesday, August 14th, Social Security will celebrate 78 years of providing retirement security to older Americans. In this time of financial uncertainty, when other sources of retirement income such as pensions and savings are increasingly out of reach for many Americans, Social Security is more important than ever. If you have not already signed the Alliance petition, which says to “Keep Social Security Strong – Let’s Not Be the Last Generation to Retire,” you can add your support at <http://bit.ly/16ESw9e>. The Alliance has also marked the birthday milestone by partnering with the group Social Security Works to release special state-by-state reports on what Social Security means for the people and economy in each state. To view the reports and see the data for your state, go to <http://tinyurl.com/mjfvazl>.

State Alliances around the country have already begun holding birthday celebrations for Social Security, and the news media is taking notice. The Iowa Alliance co-hosted a town hall with Sen. **Tom Harkin** (D-IA). View moving footage from the town hall at <http://tinyurl.com/n4dkkh7>. For coverage of a California press conference in Fremont with Rep. **Mike Honda** (D-CA), go to <http://tinyurl.com/ltonyw6>. To read about birthday celebrations in Connecticut, which were attended by Sen. **Richard Blumenthal** (D-CT), go to <http://tinyurl.com/lpcbnsq>. Dozens more events will be taking place across the country this month. Find an event near you at <http://tinyurl.com/nxvp8ls>.

Voting Rights under Attack in Florida

Florida officials, led by Gov. **Rick Scott** (R), have resumed a purge of Florida’s voting rolls. The process had been stalled due to lawsuits, but Mr. Scott claims that the Supreme Court’s recent decision to strike down a key part of the Voting Rights Act has made it clear that the voter removal program is legal. The purpose of the program is ostensibly to remove non-citizens from the voting rolls, but many opponents believe that the real motivations are political. Groups of voters likely to be disproportionately impacted by the purge include seniors, minorities, students, and low income Americans.

“These developments in Florida make it increasingly clear that the Supreme Court’s recent decision puts the voting rights of millions of Americans, including seniors, at risk,” said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Instead of trying to reduce voting, states should be encouraging political participation by expanding early voting programs and making it easier to vote from home.”

More Polling Shows Republican Party Increasingly Unpopular With Seniors

Echoing the sentiment of a *National Journal* story in the *Friday Alert* last week (<http://tinyurl.com/n8aspgq>), Democratic strategist **James Carville** and pollster **Stan Greenberg** brought more startling numbers to the table on Thursday. According to recent polling reported on the *National Memo* web site, only 28 percent of seniors rate the Republican Party favorably, and 71

percent disapprove of the job performance of House Republicans. Only 33 percent of seniors identify as Republicans, down from 39 percent in 2010. On the other hand, 39 percent of seniors now identify as Democrats, up from 29 percent in 2010. This change in party affiliation coincides with a recent survey about the policy priorities of seniors, which show that 89 percent of seniors want to protect Medicare benefits and 74 percent want to cut subsidies to big corporations. The survey also showed that a majority of seniors believe that Republicans are too extreme. In 2010, seniors voted for Republicans by a 21 point margin (38 percent to 59 percent). Among seniors likely to vote in 2014, the Republican candidate leads by just 5 points (41 percent to 46 percent). Read the analysis of the data at <http://tinyurl.com/lj8aoca>.

“This news comes as no surprise,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Republicans have attempted to gut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid while giving tax breaks and special deals to corporations and the wealthiest Americans. Seniors are a savvy voting bloc and do not support these misguided policies. The Republican Party needs to reconsider its extremist positions.”

Study Finds Dementia Dropping Sharply, as Forecast

A recent study has found that dementia rates among people 65 and older in England and Wales have plummeted by 25 percent over the past two decades, to 6.2 percent from 8.3 percent. Researchers say the trend “is probably occurring across developed countries and that could have major social and economic implications for families and societies.” Another recent study, conducted in Denmark, found that people in their 90s who were given a standard test of mental ability in 2010 scored substantially better than people who had reached their 90s a decade earlier. Both the British study and the Danish one were published in *The Lancet*. Experts on aging said the studies confirm something they had suspected but had had difficulty proving: that dementia rates would fall and mental acuity improve as the population grew healthier and better educated. The incidence of dementia is lower among those better educated, as well as among those who control their blood pressure and cholesterol, possibly because some dementia is caused by ministrokes and other vascular damage. To read the full *New York Times* story, go to <http://tinyurl.com/m36cyzz> .

Alliance President Barbara Easterling Speaks At Virginia AFL-CIO Convention

Alliance President **Barbara J. Easterling** spoke at the Virginia AFL-CIO’s convention today (August 9th). Her remarks focused on senior issues and the upcoming November 5 Virginia governor’s election, as well as the ongoing budget battles in Washington. Democratic gubernatorial candidate **Terry McAuliffe** has a very slim lead over his opponent **Ken Cuccinelli** (R) in recent polls. In Washington, conservatives continue to threaten to shut down the government unless their demands for draconian spending cuts, potentially including proposed cuts to Social Security and Medicare, are met. Ms. Easterling stressed the importance of holding firm against these threats and organizing to elect pro-senior lawmakers to both state and federal office.

“Older Virginians vote more than any other age group – this is a must-win voting bloc for both sides,” said Ms. Easterling. “We need you to help educate seniors on the huge differences between these two candidates. Please help us elect a pro-senior Governor and state legislature.”