

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006 • 202.637.5399

[www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org) • [aracommunications@retiredamericans.org](mailto:aracommunications@retiredamericans.org)

**August 2, 2013**

## **On Medicare and Medicaid's 48<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Mobilization for More Affordable Drugs**

Celebrating Medicare and Medicaid's 48<sup>th</sup> birthday, Alliance members across the country ate cake and blew out candles on Tuesday while talking about the importance of protecting and preserving the program for current and future seniors. Coverage from the Pennsylvania Medicare birthday party is at <http://tinyurl.com/nfz59jf> and <http://tinyurl.com/pog7l47>.

"Thank you to everyone who celebrated Medicare's birthday and reminded the public how important it is not to shift more costs onto seniors," said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "We can have a strong, sustainable Medicare program without cutting benefits or increasing costs, if we take measures to limit drug companies from price-gouging American taxpayers," Mr. Coyle continued. "Already, according to HHS, over 6.6 million people with Medicare have saved over \$7 billion on prescription drugs in the Medicare Part D doughnut hole since the law was enacted, for an average of \$1,061. In the first 6 months of 2013, 16.5 million beneficiaries on traditional Medicare took advantage of at least one free preventive service."

Coyle concluded, "The Medicare Drug Savings Act (S. 740 in the Senate and H.R. 1588 in the House), introduced by Sen. **Jay Rockefeller** (D-WV) and Rep. **Henry Waxman** (D-CA), would save Medicare more than \$140 billion by eliminating the loophole that blocks Medicare from negotiating with Big Pharma for cheaper drugs." Mr. Coyle's full statement can be read at <http://tinyurl.com/o6y4vlh>.

## ***National Journal*: Senior Vote Will Play a Critical Role in the 2014 Midterm Elections**

The senior vote will likely be a crucial factor in the outcome of the 2014 midterm elections, as older Americans are well known for disproportionately high turnout in midterm years. **Charlie Cook** wrote in *National Journal* recently that Democrats are closely watching the voting pattern of older Americans, "a group that voted heavily Republican in the 2010 midterm and, to a lesser extent, in 2012." Recent polling has shown that seniors are increasingly divided between the two parties. In March and July surveys, older voters' responses are showing only about half the GOP margin their voting showed last November, and about a quarter of the Republican margin in the 2010 midterm elections. Read the article at <http://tinyurl.com/n8aspgq>.

## **Update on President Obama's "Grand Bargain" Deal with Republicans**

President **Obama** on Tuesday proposed a new "grand bargain" that would couple an overhaul of the corporate tax code with job creation and investments in road and other construction projects around the country. In a speech in Chattanooga, Tenn. Mr. Obama suggested the plan as a way through the current congressional gridlock and as a way to boost the economic recovery. "Grand bargain" talks between Obama and the Republicans, which were aimed at reducing the government's long-term deficit by combining lower spending on Medicare and Social Security with some tax increases, have dragged on for months but have so far failed to produce a plan both sides could support. "Through

our hard work, we have temporarily dodged another bullet,” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. “But the battle to protect and preserve Social Security and Medicare continues. We must remain vigilant.”

### **PBS' *Frontline*: A Cautionary Tale on Assisted Living**

**Dr. Keren Brown Wilson** opened the nation's first licensed assisted living facility in Canby, Ore., in 1981. Wilson was inspired by tragedy: A massive stroke had paralyzed her mother at the age of 55, forcing her into a nursing home, where she was miserable, spending the bulk of her days confined to a hospital bed. Wilson aimed to create an alternative to nursing homes. She envisioned comfortable, apartment building-style facilities that would allow sick and fragile seniors to maintain as much personal autonomy as possible, and assisted living was born.

The PBS television show *Frontline* focused on assisted living facilities this week – often with a critical eye. As more older Americans choose to spend their later years in assisted living facilities, *FRONTLINE* and ProPublica examined “whether this loosely regulated, multi-billion dollar industry is putting seniors at risk.” The film, “Life and Death in Assisted Living,” began airing on PBS Tuesday night. You can download the full written series as an e-book or watch the film at <http://tinyurl.com/lqltqgt>. The programming noted, for instance, that the “dearth of hard and fast rules gives executives and managers at assisted living companies wide latitude in deciding how many workers should be clocking in on a given shift,” sometimes leading to staffing shortages.

“There are many wonderful assisted living facilities out there,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “It is important to investigate the background and reputation of the facility you are choosing, and to stay in close touch with loved ones once they enter assisted living.”

### **Plan to Defund Obamacare Causing Strife among Republicans**

House Republicans are scheduled to vote Friday - for the 40th time - on a bill that would prevent the Internal Revenue Service from enforcing or implementing any part of “Obamacare.” After that, an upcoming, must-pass spending bill will be the next battleground for Republicans in their long-running attempts to kill the president's health care law. If Congress fails to approve new spending authority by the end of September, government agencies would shut down as the new fiscal year starts on October 1. The core component of Obamacare - a requirement that uninsured Americans obtain health care coverage or pay a tax penalty - goes into effect in January 2014, but a first step is the opening of state-run online insurance exchanges in October.

According to Reuters, U.S. Senators usually keep conversations private when they include words such as “silly,” “dumb,” “dishonest” and “feckless” in referring to ideas being floated by members of their own political party. But “such constraints have been cast aside in recent days after a group of young, ambitious Senate conservatives including **Marco Rubio** (R-FL), **Ted Cruz** (R-TX) and **Mike Lee** (R-UT) urged a government shutdown unless ‘Obamacare’ health care exchanges are denied funding by Congress.” A bloc of about 71 House Republicans are saying they, too, will refuse to vote for a measure that funds the government if it continues to fund Obamacare. Read the full Reuters article at <http://tinyurl.com/mqs68om>.