

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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State of the Union Speech Mentions Key Alliance Issues

President **Barack Obama** delivered his fifth State of the Union speech on Tuesday night, and he featured seniors in his remarks several times. “We are pleased that the President supported reducing taxpayer subsidies for prescription drug companies during his State of the Union Address on Tuesday night. That is an example of a Medicare change that makes sense,” said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Another would be allowing Medicare to negotiate volume discounts with the big drug companies.”

“However,” Coyle continued, “we must remain vigilant to ensure that Congress does not try to enact other budget reforms that balance the budget on the backs of seniors. We should instead go after the big corporations that pay little or no taxes and get sweetheart deals from Washington. As the President said at his inauguration, ‘We reject the belief that America must choose between caring for the generation that built this country and investing in the generation that will build its future.’”

“We need the President to stick to that line of thinking. I would like ‘asking more from the wealthiest seniors,’ as the President also suggested during the State of the Union address, to be part of an overall strategy of asking the wealthiest 2% to pay more in taxes, rather than singling out seniors to pay for a budget deficit they did not cause.”

Alliance Joins Friends in Telling Congress to “Have a Heart” on Valentine’s Day

Thursday was Valentine’s Day, and the Alliance took the opportunity to tell Congress to “Have a Heart: Oppose benefit cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. And close loopholes for Wall Street and the richest 2% of Americans.” That was the theme of a Thursday Alliance press event on Capitol Hill with the co-chairs of the House Seniors Caucus, Reps. **Jan Schakowsky** (D-IL) and **Doris Matsui** (D-CA). Rep. **Michelle Lujan Grisham** (D-NM); Mr. Coyle; and **Nancy Altman**, Co-Director of Social Security Works, also spoke. For photos from the event, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ab3xrlj> (set) or <http://tinyurl.com/a8euqx3> (show).

The “Have a Heart” theme was amplified as Alliance members called in to Capitol Hill on Thursday and told their elected officials to have a heart and not cut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Callers said that we should instead ask the wealthiest 2% to pay their fair share.

Next Week is President’s Day Lobby Week

The Alliance is following up on all the Valentine’s Day activities right away with President’s Day Lobby Week activities! To see the Alliance web page devoted to the week - during which Congress will be on recess - go to <http://tinyurl.com/adyekv2>. On it you will find a tool kit with everything you need to know before meeting with your Representative: the latest Alliance fact sheets on “Smart Ways to Improve the Economy,” the budget showdown, and Social Security; Key Questions Regarding Social Security and Medicare; and more. The page also includes a list of appointments that have been arranged across the country so far.

Alliance Endorses Deutch Plan to Make Social Security Solvent in the Long-Term

On Wednesday, the Alliance sent a letter to Rep. **Ted Deutch** (D-FL), endorsing the “Protecting and Preserving Social Security Act” that he introduced along with Sen. **Mark Begich** (D-AK). The legislation ensures long-term solvency for Social Security by gradually lifting the cap on wages for high income earners. At the same time, the plan enhances benefits by applying a more accurate cost-of-living adjustment, guaranteeing that seniors’ benefits keep up with their daily needs. To see the letter, go to <http://tinyurl.com/a19auet>.

Medicare Prescription Drugs Costs are down due to the Affordable Care Act

Health care reform is paying off for seniors. According to a recent report issued by the Obama administration, the Affordable Care Act has saved 6.1 million people, largely seniors and people with disabilities, more than \$5.7 billion in prescription drug costs. The law achieved this feat by starting to close the “doughnut hole” in the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit, which had forced many Medicare beneficiaries to pay all the costs of their prescriptions. Health care reform has helped with prescription expenses since 2010, and will close the “doughnut hole” entirely by 2020. To read the Huffington Post article on the report, go to <http://tinyurl.com/bhv5a2v>. “This is a clear illustration of the benefits that health care reform has provided to seniors,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Given the rate at which prescription drug costs are rising, many seniors would not be able to pay for them without the Affordable Care Act.”

David Cote Faces Protesters after Helping to Create the Simpson-Bowles Plan

Several New Hampshire Alliance members were among the 50 protesters who confronted CEO and “Fix the Debt” Leader **David Cote** over corporate tax breaks in Manchester, NH on Monday. Cote, president of Honeywell International, sat on the president’s **Simpson-Bowles** National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, and has advocated lowering the cost-of-living adjustments of Social Security recipients or raising the age of eligibility. “Instead of reducing the deficit on the backs of working Americans, corporations should pay taxes like the rest of us,” said **Charlie Balban**, president of the New Hampshire Alliance. More at <http://tinyurl.com/acdt7wk>.

Barbara Easterling Addresses UFCW, AFSCME

Barbara J. Easterling, President of the Alliance, traveled to Phoenix for the United Food and Commercial Workers’ Executive Board Meeting on Tuesday through Thursday of this week. Last Saturday, Ms. Easterling spoke at the AFSCME Retiree Council Meeting in Washington, D.C. “Too many people in Washington and in the media continue to target Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for cold, terribly unfair cuts,” Ms. Easterling told the Retiree Council. “They want those with the least to sacrifice the most.”

Chained CPI: A Disaster for Seniors, Veterans, and Middle Class Taxpayers

In an op-ed for *The Hill*, Senator **Bernie Sanders** (I-VT) forcefully argues the case against the Chained CPI, a method of calculating cost of living adjustments that would be highly detrimental to the interests of seniors and others. Social Security beneficiaries would see their benefits reduced by as much as \$1,000 a year. To read Sanders’s op-ed, go to <http://tinyurl.com/bcmqyxj>.

This message is being sent to you as a member of the Alliance for Retired Americans. The Alliance is a nationwide membership organization organized under Internal Revenue Code 501 (c) (4) and dedicated to educating all Americans about and advocating on behalf of retirees and seniors. The Alliance is responsible for the content and has paid all costs associated with the preparation and distribution of this message.