



FRIDAY ALERT

Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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Headlines:

House Budget Committee Chair Ryan Misrepresents Economists in Poverty Report
President Obama Releases His 2015 Budget
Affordable Senior Health Insurance to Supplement Medicare
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Bridge Project Reports on the Conservative Money Trail

Here is your March 7 edition:

House Budget Committee Chair Ryan Misrepresents Economists in Poverty Report

The House Budget Committee released a report, *The War on Poverty: Fifty Years Later*, on Monday, and the findings left several economists and social scientists bemused and angry, according to *The Fiscal Times*. Several experts who read it said that Committee Chair **Paul Ryan** (R-WI) either misunderstood or misrepresented their research. One of the study's authors, **Jane Waldfogel**, a professor at Columbia University and a visiting scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation, said that she was surprised when she read the paper, "because it seemed to arbitrarily chop off data from two of the most successful years of the war on poverty." **Barbara Wolfe**, a professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, objected to Ryan's use of two of her studies: Ryan's paper erroneously claimed that one of Wolfe's studies found that only a minority of families alter their employment decisions in response to Medicaid's design. For analysis and a link to the report itself, go to <http://tinyurl.com/o23ysld>.

"It is especially galling when the misinformation is used to attack the economically disadvantaged," said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance.

President Obama Releases His 2015 Budget

President **Obama** released his 2015 budget on Tuesday. As expected, it did not include the chained CPI benefit cut to Social Security and other programs. The budget includes \$250 million to modernize customer service at the Social Security Administration in order to decrease wait times. Also, an increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit is expected to benefit 300,000 working seniors, and increased funding to the Department of Housing and Urban Development is slated to expand housing for seniors by 3,000 units. The budget also includes some cuts, especially to Medicare beneficiaries, that many seniors' advocates would rather not see. To read *The Washington Post's* budget write-up, go to <http://tinyurl.com/objbnjh>. For the National Coalition on Aging's take on

the budget, go to <http://tinyurl.com/galg8jo>. To see the White House's fact sheet on the budget and seniors, go to <http://tinyurl.com/p7evz3g>.

“Seniors continue to be thrilled with reports that came out in February that President Obama has removed the chained CPI cut to Social Security and other programs from his 2015 budget,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “We would soon like to see a White House plan, articulated well by members of Congress like Senators **Tom Harkin** (D-IA), **Bernie Sanders** (I-VT) and **Elizabeth Warren** (D-MA), as well as Rep. **Linda Sanchez** (D-CA), to expand Social Security.”

Affordable Senior Health Insurance to Supplement Medicare

Are you a union retiree or spouse? Did you know you are eligible for affordable supplemental insurance to Medicare exclusively endorsed by the Alliance? The Union Retiree Health Plan offers several options to fit your budget and is proud to announce the program's most competitive rates ever! The Open Enrollment Period is currently in effect through March 31, 2014. During this period, Medicare-eligible union retirees and spouses are guaranteed acceptance without waiting periods, regardless of preexisting health conditions. If you are not one of the thousands of your fellow members currently benefiting from the Union Retiree Health Plan, now is the best time to enroll! Already enrolled? Tell your friends! Enrollment is easy. For more information, please call **1-855-733-0557** today.

Senators Introduce Legislation to Protect Medicare for Seniors

Sen. **Mark Pryor** (D-AR) is the lead on a bill that was introduced on Thursday to protect Medicare.

Co-sponsors include fellow Democrats **Sherrod Brown** (OH), **Jeanne Shaheen** (NH), **Jeff Merkley** (OR), **Al Franken** (MN), **Brian Schatz** (HI), **Tom Udall** (NM), **Kay Hagan** (NC), **Sheldon Whitehouse** (RI), and **Warren**. The Senators introduced the Medicare Protection Act, legislation expressing strong opposition to changes in Medicare that would reduce or eliminate guaranteed benefits or raise the eligibility age for hard-working seniors.

“We’ve seen an irresponsible few in Washington try to balance the budget on the backs of our seniors by recklessly voting to turn Medicare into a voucher system and raise the eligibility age for benefits,” Sen. Pryor said. “I refuse to let that happen. That’s why I’m proud to lead the charge on the Medicare Protection Act, a responsible solution that will protect the health, safety, and financial security of nearly 600,000 seniors in my state alone.”

The Medicare Protection Act would amend the Congressional Budget Act to define any provision included in reconciliation legislation that makes changes to Medicare to reduce or eliminate guaranteed benefits or restrict eligibility criteria as extraneous and an inappropriate use of the reconciliation process. The bill would also express the sense of the Senate that 1) the Medicare eligibility age should not be increased, and 2) the Medicare program should not be privatized or turned into a voucher system. For a copy of the bill, click <http://tinyurl.com/oa29ghe>.

“This legislation would protect Medicare so that it is not turned into a voucher system, benefits are not slashed, and it is not privatized,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

Bridge Project Reports on the Conservative Money Trail

On Thursday, Bridge Project, an organization dedicated to “opposing the conservative movement’s extreme ideology and exposing its often dishonest tactics,” released a new report shining a light on the money funding the conservative agenda. Coming on the first day of this year’s Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), the report, “Conservative Transparency: A Look at the Organized Right in 2014,” and its accompanying website give the public a window into the complex and often cloudy flow of money among conservative donors, organizations, and candidates. The full report is available at <http://tinyurl.com/k5ay996>.

The first of several planned state-based case studies was also released on Thursday: it details how North Carolina, since 2010, has pushed one of the most aggressive right-wing agendas in the country. The North Carolina case study is available at <http://tinyurl.com/qcvw5ms>. The group’s accompanying website, www.ConservativeTransparency.org, tracks the flow of money among conservative donors, advocacy groups, political committees, and candidates. In the 2012 cycle, conservative outside groups spent more than \$800 million on federal elections.

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