



FRIDAY ALERT

Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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Headlines:

U.S. Income Inequality Reaches Highest Level Since 1928
Affordable Care Act Will be a Boon for Early Retirees
Alliance Members Share Their Personal Medicare Stories
Far-Right House Republicans Continue to Threaten Government Shutdown
Colorado Alliance Holds its Tenth Constitutional Convention

Here is your September 13 edition:

U.S. Income Inequality Reaches Highest Level Since 1928

A new economic study reveals income inequality between the wealthiest Americans and the rest of the population continues to increase. According to an analysis of IRS figures dating to 1913 by economists at the University of California, Berkeley, the Paris School of Economics and Oxford University, the richest 1% earned 19.3% of all household income in 2012 and the richest 10% earned 48.2%. The incomes of the richest 1% also rose by 20 percent last year, while the remaining 99% experienced only a 1% increase. Since the economic recovery began in 2009, over 95% of all income gains have gone to the top 1%, while ordinary Americans have seen their incomes stagnate. For more, see a CBS article <http://tinyurl.com/ovsp3zn> and the study <http://tinyurl.com/o7zo3mm>.

“With so much of the country’s wealth concentrated in the hands of a small number of wealthy individuals, it is harder than ever for ordinary Americans to save for retirement,” said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Yet House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan and his allies continue to insist that we need to further cut taxes for the rich, while slashing Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid benefits. They are flat-out wrong; it is time for the wealthiest Americans to contribute their fair share to ensure a secure retirement for all.”

Affordable Care Act Will be a Boon for Early Retirees

The Affordable Care Act’s insurance exchanges, set to open this October, are expected to make health insurance less costly and easier to obtain for early retirees. Currently, many Americans who retire before 65 and are no longer insured through their employers find it extremely difficult to obtain health insurance. Many insurers charge higher premiums, or even refuse coverage, based

on age or pre-existing conditions that are common among older Americans. Under the Affordable Care Act, it will be illegal for insurers to charge higher premiums based on pre-existing conditions, and there will be a cap on how much premiums can rise based on age. Additionally, low-income individuals will receive subsidies to help purchase insurance. To learn more, read a *New York Times* article at <http://tinyurl.com/owoee93>.

“It is not always possible to delay retirement until 65, particularly for those Americans who work at physically demanding jobs,” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. “Unfortunately, many early retirees are forced to spend years uninsured, since they are not yet eligible for Medicare. The Affordable Care Act will greatly improve these people’s lives by making it possible for them to purchase reasonably priced health insurance.”

Alliance Members Share Their Personal Medicare Stories

Politicians in Washington are keeping Medicare cuts on the table in debt ceiling and budget deal negotiations. To combat these efforts to slash Medicare, the Alliance is sharing with members of Congress stories from retirees who benefit from the program, but who still struggle to keep up with out-of-pocket costs. The stories illustrate that now is not the time to cut Medicare or shift costs onto beneficiaries. “My prescriptions take 1/5 of my income,” said **Michael Madamas** of West Springfield, Massachusetts. “Between my prescriptions and medical expenses, my life savings were wiped out in about five years. I now live check to check.” For more stories, visit <http://tinyurl.com/pb95ptg>.

Far-Right House Republicans Continue to Threaten Government Shutdown

This week, the Republican leadership of the House of Representatives delayed a planned vote on a bill to fund the government, after a group of far-right House Republicans rebelled against the plan. To force a Senate vote, the plan would have included a vote on a separate bill to defund the Affordable Care Act. However, the Senate would have been able to vote down the defunding bill and pass the bill that fund the government.. The breakaway group of Republicans insists that they would rather force a government shutdown than vote for any legislation that would fund the government while leaving the ACA intact. The vote has been postponed until next week. If no funding bill is passed, the government will shut down on October 1st. More from the *New York Times* at <http://tinyurl.com/lluwbpc>.

“In such a rapidly changing situation, we must keep a watchful eye for any threats not just to the Affordable Care Act but also to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “President Obama must maintain his resolve not to negotiate with this group of irresponsible extremists.”

AFL-CIO Delegates Elect Richard Trumka, Liz Shuler, and Tefere Gebre

On Tuesday, delegates to the 2013 Quadrennial AFL-CIO Convention in Los Angeles elected a trio of top officers to lead the labor movement. In his acceptance speech, re-elected President **Richard Trumka**, a Pennsylvania coal miner who rose to the presidency of the Mine Workers (UMWA) and then served as AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer until his election to the top post in 2009, called himself “an example that a man or woman can be carried far by those who came before.” AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer **Elizabeth Shuler** was elected to a second term and **Tefere Gebre**, a 45-year-old Ethiopian political refugee who immigrated to the United States as a teenager, was elected executive vice president. Ms. Shuler’s union career began with the Electrical Workers (IBEW) in Portland, Ore., and she has served as AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer since 2009. Mr. Gebre was a

former Director of Government Relations of the Laborers (LIUNA) Local 270, as well as a member of the Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) and IBEW. He also served as the Executive Director of the Orange County (Calif.) Labor Federation and as Executive Director of Frontlash, the first youth and college arm of the labor movement. More at <http://tinyurl.com/nkm9qpr>.

Colorado Alliance Holds its Tenth Constitutional Convention

Yesterday, sixty activists gathered in Denver amidst serious flooding for the Colorado Alliance's 10th Constitutional Convention. The Colorado Alliance honored State Senators **Lois Tochtrop** and **Mary Hodge** for their 100% voting record on senior issues for 2013. Elected to office were: **Ed Augden** of American Federation of Teachers (AFT) as President and **Bob Knapp** of the United Steelworkers (USW) was re-elected as Secretary. Mr. Coyle joined Congressmen **Perlmutter** and **Polis**, as well as Senator **Udall** in honoring and thanking **Frank Lay** for his service to Colorado seniors. Coyle said, "We thank Frank Lay for his years of service. The Colorado Alliance has become a force in one of the crucial swing states of presidential elections thanks to his leadership."

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