



FRIDAY ALERT

Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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Headlines:

Senate Holds Hearing on Social Security Field Office Closures and Service Cuts

Alliance Releases Fact Sheet on Social Security RAISE Act

Mentoring the Next Generation of Retiree Activists

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North Carolina Alliance Calls for Workers' Rights at Moral Monday Event

Here is your June 20 Friday Alert:

Senate Holds Hearing on Social Security Field Office Closures and Service Cuts

On Wednesday, the Senate Special Committee on Aging held a hearing to look at the impact of recent Social Security field office closures and service cuts. Although the Social Security Administration (SSA) is receiving record numbers of claims as the Baby Boomer generation hits retirement age, budget cuts have forced the closing of 64 field offices and 533 mobile offices since 2010. Over the last three years, 11,000 SSA jobs have already been trimmed, and a proposal is circulating within the SSA to accelerate office closures, eliminate many in-person services, and shift beneficiary support to online and telephone based service. A report released by the bipartisan Senate committee criticized Social Security administrators for making decisions about shuttering field offices without adequately evaluating how individual communities might be affected.

The Alliance and its coalition partner Social Security Works have gathered over 100,000 petition signatures urging Congress to provide full funding to the Social Security Administration (SSA) and keep Social Security offices open. "Americans came together to create the Social Security system to provide a basic, reliable foundation for retirement and disability," said Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans. "Closing field offices and making it more difficult to access benefits

information is an attempt to dismantle that foundation.” More than 100,000 activists have already signed a petition urging Congress to put a stop to Social Security service cuts. If you have not already done so and would like to, go to <http://tinyurl.com/qe9nfl6>.

Alliance Releases Fact Sheet on Social Security RAISE Act

On Monday, the Alliance released a new fact sheet on S.2455, the Retirement and Income Security Enhancement Act of 2014 (RAISE Act), introduced last week by Sen. Mark Begich (D-AK) and sponsored by Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA). It calls for increasing Social Security benefits for divorced spouses, widows and widowers and children of retired, disabled, or deceased workers.

“At a time when middle class wages remain flat and access to employer provided pensions is diminishing, Social Security represents an increasingly important part of retirement security,” said Barbara J. Easterling, President of the Alliance. “The expansion of Social Security is being pushed to the forefront of the national agenda.” To learn more about the RAISE Act, check out the Alliance fact sheet at <http://bit.ly/1ilH1MK>.

Mentoring the Next Generation of Retiree Activists

This spring, the Alliance partnered with the Berger–Marks Foundation for an initial training session focused on establishing mentorship programs that aim to build the ranks of active members and leaders within the Alliance. The training session, held at the Alliance National Membership Convention in Las Vegas, drew on the Berger-Marks mentorship handbook *The Next Generation*, which includes practical guidance and best practice examples for developing and operating effective mentorship programs.

Speaking on the importance of mentorship in the ongoing battle to defend Social Security, Illinois Alliance President and training session attendee Barbara Franklin commented, “We must mobilize and educate our younger people in order to protect what we’ve already won and keep trying to strengthen Social Security for future generations.” The training session emphasized more seasoned Alliance members taking an active role in establishing mentorship relationships with both newer members and union workers approaching retirement age. The full Berger-Marks mentoring handbook is available at <http://bit.ly/1irpgGo>.

Moving to Florida? Florida Alliance Urges You to Think Twice

A recent report assembled by the Florida Alliance for Retired Americans entitled *Florida- A State of Embarrassment* calls attention to some of the state’s ongoing problems and urges the state’s political leaders to take action to address them. At the top of the list are extreme income inequality, a regressive

tax structure, high crime rates, and a weak public education system. According to Tony Fransetta, President of FLARA, “The state of Florida is one of acute embarrassment. The governor and legislative leadership have turned their backs on everyone but the wealthy and politically connected. Our quality of life continues to deteriorate.” The report and the FLARA Annual Convention earlier this week were covered by a number of Florida news outlets including the Tampa Bay Times and Fox 35 Orlando. More at www.flara.org and <http://tinyurl.com/kta3o4o>.

Increasingly, Older Americans Opting for Golden Girls-style Living Arrangements

With surveys showing that most Americans prefer to remain in their own homes as they age, an increasing number of older adults and seniors are looking to shared housing as a means of saving money and finding companionship. In 2013, the number of households where single people age 46 to 64 shared housing with non-relatives grew to almost 1.1 million. Such arrangements can be particularly appealing to people who find themselves single following divorce or the death of a spouse. Shared housing arrangements can take several forms including a landlord-tenant setup, a group renting a house together, and a model in which an older person rents out a discounted room in exchange for household help. For home owners, such arrangements can provide a steady source of income and a chance to interact with housemates. To read more on the Golden Girls-phenomenon in The Washington Post, go to <http://wapo.st/STzQyZ>.

“It is important to want the same amount of social interaction as your housemates when entering a Golden Girls-style living arrangement,” advises Ruben Burks, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

North Carolina Alliance Calls for Workers’ Rights at Moral Monday Event

Earlier this week, members of the North Carolina Alliance took part in the Moral Monday protest in Raleigh. This week’s Moral Monday demonstration focused on workers’ rights and was part of an ongoing series of protests aimed at bringing attention to controversial legislation advanced by the state’s Republican-controlled government. Following previous protests, lawmakers attempted to silence protestors by amending Legislative Building rules with broad restrictions on creating any “imminent disturbance.” These rules have been met with various legal challenges on their constitutionality. To view photos from the event, go to <http://bit.ly/1jAYjQV>.

For a printable version of this document, go to <http://bit.ly/1lRiKc8>.

For the Alliance's Spanish language page, which includes last week's Friday Alert in Spanish, go to www.alianzadejubilados.org.

