



# FRIDAY ALERT

Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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Here is your June 14th edition:

## **Momentum Continues to Build Ahead of July 2nd Human Chain Day of Action**

The Alliance and our allies continue to plan events around the country for the July 2nd "Human Chain against the Chained CPI" National Day of Action. The day is devoted to stopping the chained CPI benefit cut to Social Security. More than forty actions are already scheduled to take place in front of key Congressional offices and Federal Buildings across the country. A comprehensive map of events is now available, along with an event listing, on our website at <http://tinyurl.com/pd8pbsz>. Several members of the U.S. Senate and House are already confirmed to join the July 2 events – stay tuned for details.

"We cannot cut Social Security," said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. "Some cuts never heal!"

## **Did Your U.S. Rep. Vote for the Extremist Republican Study Committee Budget?**

This past March, the U.S. House of Representatives held a vote on a budget proposed by the House Republican Study Committee (RSC), a caucus of 170 conservative Republicans. If passed, the budget would have decimated crucial benefit programs. Medicare would be gutted by turning it into a voucher program. Social Security would be cut by implementing chained CPI and increasing the retirement age to 70. All discretionary spending, including Meals on Wheels and vital medical research, would have been frozen until 2017. The RSC budget ultimately failed, but 104 Republicans (over half of the House Republican caucus) voted to pass it. To view a list of these lawmakers, go to <http://tinyurl.com/mn5z4ss>.

"The RSC budget achieves the remarkable feat of being even more harmful to retirees than the already destructive **Paul Ryan** budget," said Ms. Easterling. "The Alliance is committing to ensuring that our members know how extreme these 104 politicians are."

## **New York Times Editorial Board Comes Out Against Social Security Cuts**

In a strongly worded editorial released this past Sunday, *The New York Times* Editorial Board condemned the chained CPI and other proposed cuts to Social Security. The editorial states that the majority of people over 65 get two-thirds or more of their income from Social Security. It also points out that benefits are already being reduced due to the rise in Medicare Part B premiums and the gradual increase in the retirement age from 65 to 67. For these reasons, the editorial board argues that no further across the board cuts to Social Security, including the chained CPI, should be implemented. To read it, go to <http://tinyurl.com/og9zk45>. "It is heartening to see the editorial board of such a major paper strongly denounce chained CPI and other Social Security cuts," said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "Those who continue to support draconian cuts are finding that their position is increasingly out of the mainstream."

The Sunday Times also contained an article stressing that people at nearly all levels of the income distribution have under-saved. Social Security is going to be a major, and maybe primary, source of income for people, even for those with \$1 million in net worth. (<http://tinyurl.com/kkwsdql>).

## Mississippi Republicans Risk Entire Medicaid Program to Avoid Vote on Expansion

Mississippi's entire Medicaid program is in danger of losing all funding due to the refusal of Gov. **Phil Bryant** (R) and conservative leaders in the state legislature to hold a vote on the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion. Mississippi has not passed a Medicaid budget, meaning that the program will run out of funding and cease to exist on July 1. Republican leaders are demanding that Democrats pass a bill reauthorizing Medicaid without the expansion, which would prevent them from having to bring the expansion to the floor for an up-or-down vote. Currently, 700,000 people are enrolled in Mississippi's Medicaid program. If the expansion passes, coverage would be expanded to up to 300,000 more Mississippians. To read a Politico write up of the story, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ppdtjwh>.

"Governor Bryant and his allies should be ashamed of themselves," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "This is a clear case of putting politics and obstructionism above the interests of Mississippi's most vulnerable citizens."

## Medicare Must Retain Crucial Protections against "Balance Billing"

"Balance billing" is a practice that occurs when health care providers, such as physicians or hospitals, feel that they have not been paid enough by a patient's health care plan, and they make up the difference by levying charges on the patient. Currently, Medicare includes protections that make this practice illegal for all approved Medicare services. However, a Medicare reform bill recently proposed by House Republicans does not include the balance billing protections. To learn more about balance billing and how to protect yourself, go to <http://tinyurl.com/qcm636l>. To read a letter from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) defending the protections, go to <http://tinyurl.com/k7uu5me>. "Removing Medicare's protections against balance billing would leave seniors vulnerable to unfair and unexpected charges," said Mr. Coyle. "We are staunchly opposed to any legislation that would remove these protections."

## Average Household Income of American Seniors is Precariously Low

According to an analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data recently released by the financial website [Interest.com](http://Interest.com), the median household income for Americans over the age of 65 is \$35,107. That amount is only 57% of the median household income for Americans 45 to 64, meaning that many seniors are living on considerably lower incomes than they had during their working lives. The analysis found that the average varied considerably by state, ranging from 45% of pre-retirement income in Massachusetts to 71% in Nevada. Retirement experts recommend that retirees retain at least 70% of pre-retirement income, but only two out of fifty states meet that benchmark in their average. To read a Washington Post article about the analysis, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lv249n6>. "The results of this study, while very troubling, are no surprise in light of the decrease in pensions and the recent recession making it very difficult for seniors to save for retirement," said Mr. Burks. "Given these difficult circumstances, it is more crucial than ever to protect, preserve, and strengthen Social Security and Medicare."

For a printable version of this document, go to <http://bit.ly/12LxZkB>.



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