



# FRIDAY ALERT

## Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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### *Headlines:*

**Seniors' Issues Front and Center in Government Shutdown, Debt Ceiling Talks**  
**More than Two Dozen House Republicans Open to a Clean Government Funding Bill**  
**Gerrymandering Has Made the Tea Party Stronger**  
**Early Voting for Cincinnati Pension Issue Has Begun**  
**Pennsylvania Alliance Holds Its Convention in Grantville, PA**

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Here is your October 11, 2013 Friday Alert:

### **Seniors' Issues Front and Center in Government Shutdown, Debt Ceiling Talks**

On Wednesday, a letter instigated by Rep. **Reid Ribble** (R-WI) was signed by 51 House Republicans, urging Speaker **John Boehner** (R-OH) to make cuts to Social Security benefits before the debt ceiling is raised and the government is re-opened. To read the letter and see if your U.S Representative was one of those who signed it, go to <http://bit.ly/164ZAZY>. The letter recommends:

- raising the retirement age;
- implementing the chained CPI benefit cut to Social Security;
- means testing Social Security benefits for higher income recipients; and
- cutting the FICA withholding rate that funds the Social Security Trust Fund.

“The letter was nothing short of a direct assault on Social Security,” said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “This will undoubtedly be a major issue for months to come and into the 2014 elections.” A blog post about the letter at *The Daily Kos* is here: <http://bit.ly/GROQZe>.

Also, on Wednesday, another Representative from Wisconsin, House Budget Committee Chairman **Paul Ryan**, published an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* asking for cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid in exchange for an increase to the debt ceiling <http://tinyurl.com/larfndb>. For the latest on the budget negotiations from *Politico*, go to <http://tinyurl.com/kt6e2tk>.

### **More than Two Dozen House Republicans Open to a Clean Government Funding Bill**

Several House Republicans have said they are open to supporting a “clean” Continuing Resolution (CR, a government funding bill), but are not interested in forcing a vote on such a measure. Such a bill would re-open the government without cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid or any other conditions. Democrats have launched a discharge petition aimed at forcing a vote on that legislation; two hundred and eighteen signatures are required to compel a roll call, and that looks unlikely any time soon. Mr. Boehner has

said a clean continuing resolution doesn't have the votes to pass the House. President **Obama** and Senate Majority Leader **Harry Reid** (D-NV) challenged him on Monday to prove it by scheduling a vote. To see which Representatives are open to a clean CR and what they are saying, go to <http://tinyurl.com/mgqzw6x>.

The Alliance sent a special message to activists from those Representatives' and other Congressional Districts, including a pass-through letter to the U.S. House, on Wednesday. If you have not signed the letter demanding a Clean Continuing Resolution to Re-open the Government and No Cuts to Seniors' Programs, go to <http://bit.ly/1gwvc2a>.

### **Gerrymandering Has Made the Tea Party Stronger**

According to *National Journal*, resolving the serial showdowns over the federal budget and debt ceiling may be more difficult now than during the last shutdown under **Bill Clinton** and **Newt Gingrich**, because so many more House Republicans today represent safe GOP districts (<http://tinyurl.com/k2ppet5>). "Comparing today's 232-seat Republican majority with the 236 seats Republicans ultimately held after special elections and party switches from 1995-96 underscores the extent to which GOP legislators have succeeded in fortifying themselves into homogeneously conservative districts," the article says – a reference to gerrymandering. Data show that the percentage of House Republicans in overwhelmingly safe districts has soared, while the portion in even marginally competitive seats has plummeted. This means that the personal electoral incentives for most House Republicans would encourage more—not less—confrontation as the standoffs proceed, notes **Gary C. Jacobson**, an expert on Congress at the University of California (San Diego). "The electoral threat of them angering anybody outside of their base is pretty low," he says.

"I don't think this is what our forefathers had in mind when they set up the American system of government," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Gerrymandering sets up a dynamic where a small, extreme faction can subvert the constitution."

### **Early Voting for Cincinnati Pension Issue Has Begun**

On Tuesday, the Alliance and AFSCME teamed up to recruit volunteers to defeat Issue 4, a ballot initiative to eliminate public workers' pensions in Cincinnati. The biggest change would be to workers employed by the city beginning in 2014: instead of getting a defined benefit at retirement, with a known payment each month, employees would have a 401k plan. In addition, taxes and fees on Cincinnati residents would increase. **Norm Wernet**, President of the Ohio Alliance, and **Betty Thomas**, coordinator for Ohio AFSCME Retiree Chapter 1184, led a conference call with local Alliance and AFSCME members on Tuesday. Early voting on this issue has already begun, and the election will be held on November 5. "These are hard workers who depend even more on their pensions, because they don't receive Social Security," said Mr. Wernet.

### **Pennsylvania Alliance Holds Its Convention in Grantville, PA**

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the Pennsylvania Alliance for Retired Americans (PARA) held its Triennial Convention in Grantville, PA. Wayne Burton was elected President, after previously serving as Secretary since 2010 and as a Zone Coordinator in 2008. Mr. Burton is a retired Political Science professor from West Chester University, and is the President of APSCURF, the retiree organization for the union representing all state university professors. **John White**, an AFSCME Retiree, was elected Executive Vice President; **Dwayne Thomas**, a retired Mine Worker, was elected Secretary; and **Mike Doyle**, a community member from Bucks County, was re-elected Treasurer. The delegates heard from speakers such as Alliance President **Barbara Easterling**; Pennsylvania AFL-CIO President **Rick Bloomingdale** and Secretary-Treasurer **Frank Snyder**; Alliance Director for Philanthropy and Corporate Relations **Dani Pere**; National Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Director **Jim Centner**; and Assistant Director of AFSCME Retirees **Karen Gilgoff**. Outgoing President **Jean Friday** and retired Board Member **Charlie Kelly** were both

honored at the banquet for their service to PARA.

“Congratulations to all the new and retired officers!” said Ms. Easterling. “We are sorry to see Jean Friday step down. She has been so instrumental in all of the Pennsylvania Alliance’s major accomplishments during her tenure. Pennsylvania’s 10 year anniversary of our chartering with the Alliance is coming up in 2014 – we wouldn’t have made it without you, Jean!”

For a printable version of this document, go to <http://bit.ly/1cEkk24>.



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