

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## **Senate Panel Rejects “Public Option” on Health Bill**

Members of the Senate Finance Committee this week defeated two efforts to add a “public option” to the health care bill drafted by committee chair **Max Baucus** (D-MT). Democrats **Kent Conrad** (ND) and **Blanche Lincoln** (AR) joined Baucus and all panel Republicans in defeating a public option amendment by Senator **Charles Schumer** (D-NY). Democrats **Bill Nelson** (FL) and **Tom Carper** (DE) voted for the Schumer amendment, but joined Baucus, Conrad, Lincoln and all committee Republicans in voting against a public option amendment by Senator **Jay Rockefeller** (D-WV). At press time, the committee was completing consideration of the Baucus bill, which would then be merged with a bill from the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee that includes a public option. “A strong public option is our best way to rein in the premiums and business practices of the big insurance companies,” said Alliance President **Barbara J. Easterling**.

## **Florida Alliance Calls Out Humana on Lies, Scare Tactics**

Florida Alliance members joined with allies in the progressive and labor communities on Tuesday outside of a Palm Beach Humana office to protest the company’s recent mailings that falsely warned seniors that their benefits would be cut by health insurance reform. Florida Alliance president **Tony Fransetta** and AFSCME’s **Willie Pouncy Jr.** led a rally outside the building, but when they and other activists tried to deliver an open letter to the insurance giant, they were rebuffed and had a door closed in their face by a Humana official. Check out the video here: <http://ara.typepad.com/blog/2009/10/humana-protest-letter-delivery.html>. “Our tax dollars and Medicare premiums overpay Humana and other insurance companies by nearly 20 percent. We must blow the whistle on this wasteful spending and outrageous corporate behavior,” said Alliance Executive Director **Edward F. Coyle**.

## **Arizona at Center of Health Reform Debate**

Today in Phoenix members of the Arizona Alliance will hold their 2009 Biennial Convention to educate and mobilize Grand Canyon State retirees on key state and national issues, particularly health insurance reform. Attendees will receive updates on the latest developments in Washington and discuss ways to work with a wide range of progressive groups in support of a strong pro-retiree, pro-worker health care bill. Meanwhile, Senator **Jon Kyl** (R-AZ) has become one the lead opponents of congressional efforts to improve health care and curb excesses by big insurers. Angered by Medicare criticism of false and misleading mailings by Medicare Advantage companies (see above), Kyl this week sponsored an amendment to, “protect the First Amendment rights of health plans.” Kyl also raised eyebrows during a Senate Finance Committee debate when he said, “I don’t need maternity care, so requiring that on my health insurance policy is something that I don’t need and will make the policy more expensive.” Senator **Debbie Stabenow** (D-MI)

quickly shot back, "I think your mom probably did." **Ruben Burks**, Alliance Secretary-Treasurer, said, "it is more important than ever that we know where our elected officials stand."

### **Save the Date: Alliance National Convention April 5-8 in Las Vegas**

Mark your calendars for April 5-8, 2010 for the Alliance's National Convention! Join us in Las Vegas to kick off our grassroots efforts for the important 2010 elections. We will have workshops and training sessions to strengthen our organizing and advocacy skills, as well hear from leading experts in public policy, health care and aging, and the media. Convention attendees will be electing officers for the Alliance. Watch for more details in an upcoming Friday Alert.

### **Blogs - the Way of the Future**

As some of you may know, the Alliance for Retired Americans has a new and exciting blog. Go to: <http://ara.typepad.com/> to check it out! This new blog will allow us to regularly enter commentary, event descriptions, state actions and show off all the photos and videos from the state alliances and beyond. It will compliment our Flickr photosharing site:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/retiredamericans/> and Youtube videosharing site:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/RetiredAmericans> very nicely. The great thing about "blogging" is that it allows for more frequent, informal and 2-way communication between you and the Alliance. Please visit and "bookmark" <http://ara.typepad.com> to see the latest videos, photos and get updates on recent news. You can also post comments on posts simply by clicking "comments" below a post. If you are really inspired, you can set up an account and continue to blog about the issues that matter to you on state and national weblogs! This is just one way the Alliance for Retired Americans will proliferate its message to both members and the public - keeping one another informed as we spread our news far and wide!

### **"Retirees with the Write Stuff"**

The Letters to the Editor page is often the most widely read section of a local newspaper. Many members of the Alliance realize that it is an ideal forum where we can share our stories and show how deeply we care about the issues. Letters to the Editor are free, which helps when we are going up against big drug and insurance companies with high-priced lobbyists. "Retirees with the Write Stuff" is a project of the Alliance that rewards retirees whose letters are published. Most recently, **Shane Fox** of Texas <http://ara.typepad.com/blog/2009/09/in-yesterdays-tyler-morning-telegraph-tx.html> and **Donna McGrath** of Nebraska contributed to their state and local papers. If you have had a Letter to the Editor published recently, please send us an email at [letters@retiredamericans.org](mailto:letters@retiredamericans.org) so that we can recognize you and send you a "Write Stuff" pen. If you need assistance with the letter-writing or submission process, please contact your state Alliance!

### **Online Tools You Can Use**

**Web:** [www.retiredamericans.org/](http://www.retiredamericans.org/)

**Blog:** <http://ara.typepad.com>

**Flickr:** [www.flickr.com/photos/retiredamericans/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/retiredamericans/)    **YouTube:** [www.youtube.com/user/RetiredAmericans](http://www.youtube.com/user/RetiredAmericans)

**Facebook:** Alliance for Retired Americans fan page    **Twitter:** <http://twitter.com/ActiveRetirees>