

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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**October 30, 2009**

## **Speaker Pelosi Unveils House Health Care Bill**

The U.S. House Speaker, **Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)**, unveiled an \$894 billion health care package on Thursday that would provide insurance to up to 36 million people by offering subsidies to moderate-income Americans to buy insurance, either from private carriers or a new government-run plan, and by broadly expanding Medicaid for those with limited incomes. House Democratic leaders, citing a cost analysis by the Congressional Budget Office, said the bill would reduce future federal deficits by about \$30 billion over the next 10 years, meeting President **Obama's** demand that the health legislation not add "one dime" to the national debt. The measure is a combination of bills approved by three separate House committees. Action on the bill is expected next Thursday. Speaking at the Capitol Hill event was **Priscilla King**, a member of the Alliance from Bow, New Hampshire, who, along with her husband, has gone into debt due to the doughnut hole gap in prescription drug coverage. Rep. **Carol Shea-Porter (D)** of New Hampshire introduced her. The House bill would begin to close the doughnut hole in 2010 by \$500 and completely close it in 5 years. "Seniors win with this bill," said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. "It will strengthen Medicare by reducing skyrocketing health care costs."

## **Alliance Praises Senate Majority Leader Reid's Support of Public Option**

Senate Majority Leader **Harry Reid (D-NV)** announced on Monday that he would include a public option plan in the Senate's health care legislation, but would allow states to opt out of the program. "Members of the Alliance are pleased to learn of the Senate Majority Leader's inclusion of a public option in the still-developing Senate health reform bill. His action on Monday is a solid step toward legislation that will help Americans of all ages better afford to see a doctor or get a prescription filled," said **Edward Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance.

## **Roundtable, Conference Call Events Discuss House and Senate Health Bills**

Also on Monday, Speaker Pelosi took part in a senior health care roundtable in Sunrise, Florida. **Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz** and the South Florida Congressional Delegation sponsored the event, which included Florida Alliance President **Tony Fransetta**.

During a national conference call with Alliance leaders and members on Wednesday, kudos were given to the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, whose website fought back against a propaganda campaign of misinformation about the Canadian health care system that was similar to a campaign of falsehoods in the U.S. The conference call also covered elements already known to be in the House and Senate health care bills. In its size and scope, the House bill is very similar to the bill measure under development by Sen. Reid, who is seeking to combine bills passed by two committees. But there are crucial differences. The House bill would impose an income surtax on individuals earning more than \$500,000 and couples earning more

than \$1 million. The Senate bill would impose a tax on higher-end insurance policies, which could have a detrimental effect on coverage for retirees and older workers. In addition to expanding coverage for the uninsured, both the House and Senate versions of the legislation would bar the denial of coverage based on pre-existing medical conditions. Both the House and the Senate bills would cut subsidies currently given by the government to insurance companies under the private Medicare Advantage prescription drug program. Both bills would also help reimburse employers who cover early retirees aged 55-64, and would include the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act for long term care.

### **November 5: National Day-of-Action for Health Care Reform**

Please join the Alliance, the AFL-CIO, and other progressive groups on November 5 for a National Day of Action for health care reform. A special, toll-free phone number (1-877-323-5246) will connect you to your U.S. House and Senate members so you can tell them to support a bill that will be good for retirees and workers. “With all the money the big insurance companies are spending to block reform, our voices are needed more than ever,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

### **Get the Word Out About Health Reform with a New 2-Minute Video for Retirees!**

A video from Seniors to Seniors ([www.seniorstoseniors.org](http://www.seniorstoseniors.org)), a coalition of aging groups including the Alliance, shows how health reform will improve Medicare. The video, featuring Alliance state and national leaders **Phil Feaster** and **Judy Cato**, is available to you free by turning on your computer's speakers and going to: <http://ara.typepad.com/blog/2009/10/seniors-to-seniors.html>.

Ms. Cato, Executive Vice President of the Alliance, also appeared in Pittsburgh on Saturday. She discussed health care reform with residents of a senior housing facility.

### **Alliance Stands Up for Those in Bridge Years**

The Alliance has joined labor, advocacy, and business groups in the “Bridge Years Health Coalition” to call attention to the 33 million Americans ages 55-64 who are moving from full employment to what they hope will be a secure retirement. In letters to Congress and an ad in the Washington publication, *Politico*, the Coalition notes that this demographic is too young for Medicare but yet is often unable to afford private insurance because of bias against age and medical condition. The group urges Congress to pass a health reform bill that provides permanent access to health care coverage that is not contingent upon age, health, or employment status.

### **Rep. Weiner, Seniors Tell GOP Public Option Opponents to Give Up Their Medicare**

Last Thursday, Rep. **Anthony Weiner** (D-NY) revealed that 151 members of the House and Senate presently accept government-funded and administered single-payer health care - Medicare. Weiner requested that the 55 of the 151 members who fervently oppose a public option in the health insurance reform bill relinquish their Medicare benefits. Today, seniors in Arizona are calling out Sen. **Jon Kyl** (R-AZ) for accepting Medicare benefits but opposing a public option for Arizonans. They are gathering in front of Kyl's Phoenix office in Halloween costumes, telling him that it is inappropriate to receive Medicare and fight against a public option.