

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Alliance Formally Endorses House Health Care Bill

On Tuesday, the Alliance sent a letter supporting the Affordable Health Care for America Act, H.R. 3962, to all members of the U.S. House. The letter urges prompt passage of the health reform legislation, saying it makes important, positive changes in the health care needs of older Americans - none more important than Medicare improvements. “The bill closes the Part D doughnut hole coverage gap beginning in 2010,” said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Medicare beneficiaries will immediately see that gap closed by \$500, in addition to 50% price discounts for name brand drugs for seniors in the gap until it is fully closed. The elimination of co-payments for Medicare preventive services is also a major improvement.” In addition, the bill requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to negotiate drug prices on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries, a position long advocated by the Alliance. Eliminating Medicare Advantage overpayments will extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund. Companion legislation to H.R. 3962 will improve how physicians receive Medicare reimbursements, allowing older Americans the ability to keep their choice of doctor. Many Alliance members are not yet Medicare eligible, and H.R. 3962 helps them as well. The provisions creating a reinsurance fund for retirees ages 55-64 and insurance reforms on age rating, the elimination of pre-existing conditions as a basis for denial of coverage, and the creation of an insurance exchange, as well as a public option, will all benefit pre-Medicare eligible retirees.

Alliance members had the chance to speak with HHS Secretary **Kathleen Sebelius** about health insurance reform on a conference call on Thursday. In her remarks, Secretary Sebelius mentioned the Alliance’s work in support of health care reform and gave her thanks. That same day was a national call-in day for Alliance activists to contact Congress about health reform priorities.

Rep. **Louise Slaughter** (D-NY) said she expects the House to consider H.R. 3962 during a rare Saturday session on November 7. She predicted a final vote would come about 6 p.m. All of the votes will have to come from Democratic ranks, since Republicans are expected to unite in opposition to the bill. In an analysis released Wednesday, the Congressional Budget Office said a separate GOP plan would reduce the number of uninsured by 3 million, compared with the Democratic bill that would reduce the number by 36 million.

Focus Turns from 2009 Elections to 2010

Democrats lost the governors’ mansions in New Jersey and Virginia on Tuesday night. In the special election in New York's 23rd Congressional District, Democrat **Bill Owens** captured the House seat vacated by Republican **John McHugh**. California Lt. Governor **John Garamendi** won the election to replace former U.S. Rep. **Ellen Tauscher** in California's 10th Congressional District, keeping that seat Democratic. “We must realize that the 2010 elections have already

started,” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. “Next fall, older Americans will make up over one-third of the turnout in key states and congressional districts. That is why we have been the object of a lot of attention – and a lot of misinformation. It is more important than ever that we know the issues and where the candidates stand.”

GOP Fear Mongering Continues

Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC) said on Monday on the House floor that a health reform bill is a greater threat to our country than any terrorist organization (watch it here: <http://bit.ly/31ZRDM>). In spite of fear mongering regarding health reform, there is a popular support for reform efforts among the American public. **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance, said, “Despite efforts by conservatives to derail health insurance reform, seniors know better, and we are finally moving forward in our efforts to reform the broken health insurance system in this country.”

Humana Profits Rise 65% in Third Quarter

Health insurer Humana posted a 65% jump in third-quarter profit on Monday, due largely to a bulging membership and to premiums from Medicare Advantage. Humana has faced the wrath of Alliance members across the country after falsely warning its members that their benefits are at risk due to health reform. Many senior advocates see the gigantic rise in profits as further proof of Medicare Advantage subsidies being an unnecessary corporate giveaway from the government to private insurers at the expense of seniors.

Alliance Chapters State by State: Florida, Maryland-DC, Indiana

State by state, seniors are standing up and getting creative around health insurance reform. Last Friday in Florida, the Grim Reaper “Trick or Treated” at Republican Headquarters in Tallahassee to ask why Republicans are standing in the way of real reform efforts. **Barbara DeVane**, Secretary for the Florida Alliance, said health reform will “rein in the high costs of health care for our families, our businesses and our government.” [<http://bit.ly/1T65VQ>] Last Saturday, the Maryland-DC Alliance held their annual convention. Mr. Coyle attended and spoke about separating fact from fiction in health reform [<http://bit.ly/2QTh7j>]. Indiana retirees made news last week when they protested Federal Mogul, a company that is proposing cutting health benefits for workers and retirees in a new contract negotiation.

Las Vegas Convention Sign-up Details Now Available!

Mark your calendars for April 5-8, 2010 for the Alliance’s National Convention in Las Vegas, where we will kick off our grassroots efforts for the 2010 elections. We will have workshops and training sessions to strengthen our organizing and advocacy skills, and hear from leading experts in public policy, health care and aging, and the media. Convention attendees will also be electing officers for the Alliance. Alliance members will elect a president and secretary-treasurer, and community members will elect six community-based board members. Register for the convention by calling 1-888-373-6497, or by visiting <http://tiny.cc/gkItc>. Hotel reservations must be made by contacting Bally's Las Vegas directly at 1-800-358-8777. To vote in the Alliance elections, conference attendees must be members of the Alliance by December 5, 2009.