

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Reid Presents Health Care Bill That Cuts \$130 Billion from the Federal Deficit

Senate Majority Leader **Harry Reid** (D-NV) presented an \$848 billion health-care overhaul package on Wednesday that would help Americans of all ages better afford to see a doctor and get a prescription filled. An analysis of the Senate bill, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office determined that it would cut federal deficits by \$130 billion over the next decade. "Our nation's retirees need lower prescription drug prices, the ability to get life-saving preventive screenings and tests, and an end to the Medicare Trust Fund-draining subsidies to the private insurance companies who run Medicare Advantage programs. Senator Reid's bill offers solid progress in these important areas," said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "We are also pleased to see bill include a public option." Sen. Reid said on Tuesday that he remained cautiously optimistic that he could get the Senate's 58 Democrats and 2 independents to vote to thwart a filibuster on what is known as a motion to proceed, the initial step in any debate. On Thursday, he said that first crucial vote on the overhaul package would likely take place on Saturday. Approval relies largely on the votes of three wavering moderate Democrats: Senators **Ben Nelson** of Nebraska, **Mary Landrieu** of Louisiana and **Blanche Lincoln** of Arkansas.

House Acts to Prevent Drastic Cuts in Medicare Payments to Doctors

Also on Thursday, the House approved a \$210 billion measure - known as the "doc fix" - that will adjust Medicare payment rates to doctors, avoiding a 21% cut in January and continuing cuts in the years ahead. A cut of that magnitude could reduce access to physicians for Medicare beneficiaries throughout the country. The bill, H.R. 3961, is companion legislation to H.R. 3962, the House-passed health care reform bill. H.R. 3961, which passed by a vote of 243-183, will also allow older Americans the ability to keep their choice of doctor. Complete results of the vote are available at <http://bit.ly/4hYNYx>.

A report requested by Republicans and released on Saturday by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services drew attention from health reform critics this week. The report questioned the expected savings from the House-approved health care overhaul. However, CMS's analysis is not an apples-to-apples comparison to the cost estimate conducted by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT), because CMS did not review tax provisions, which help offset the price tag of the Democrats' measure. It is certain that the House health care reform bill will extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund by five years, significantly longer than any other recent proposal. The legislation will also cut out-of-pocket spending by more than \$200 billion by 2019. "We must separate fact from fiction to avoid being alarmed unnecessarily," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Overall, national spending on health care would increase by less than 1.3% over the next decade with the House

bill, even though millions of additional people will gain coverage. Without health care reform, health care costs are expected to rise at rates double that of inflation, growing every year as a larger share of the Gross National Product.” To learn more facts about the financial benefits of H.R. 3962 to retirees, go to <http://bit.ly/jV9Ml>.

Rising Drug Costs in Face of Health Reform

The New York Times reported early this week that the drug industry has been raising its prices at the fastest rate in years - this year by 9%. The rise has caused speculation about price increases in advance of health reform legislation. Those increases will add more than \$10 billion to the nation's \$300 billion drug bill this year, and led Democrats in Congress to request two investigations of drug industry pricing [<http://bit.ly/1NcGtz>] on Wednesday.

On the Road: West Virginia

On Thursday, Alliance President **Barbara J. Easterling** joined West Virginia Alliance President **Spud Terry** and active retirees at their annual membership meeting. Easterling urged WV retirees to set the record straight and not be divided when it comes to health reform, saying, “Through it all, my fellow retirees, we need to stay together. We need to keep reaching out to retirees from community-based groups. Together, we can be partners in change.”

Retirees with the Write Stuff: Write Letter, Win Pen

“Retirees with the Write Stuff” is an Alliance project recognizing retirees whose letters to the editor are published. Most recently, **Kathy Breeden, James Brown, Bob Dougherty, Earl Frampton, Patricia Gooden, John Harris, Owen Humphress, Charlie Lemon, Beatrice Lumpkin, John Newman, Terry Schleder, and William Stevens** contributed to their state and local papers. If you have had a letter published recently, please send us an email at letters@retiredamericans.org so that we can recognize you and send you a “Write Stuff” pen.

Las Vegas Convention Sign-up Details Now Available!

Mark your calendars for April 5-8, 2010 in order to attend the Alliance's National Convention in Las Vegas, where we will kick off our grassroots efforts for the 2010 elections. New details about the conference are now posted on the Alliance's home web page, www.retiredamericans.org; to learn more, simply click on “2010 National Convention” or go to <http://bit.ly/1jIzz2>. Register for the convention directly from that page, or by calling 1-888-373-6497. We will have workshops and training sessions to strengthen our organizing and advocacy skills, and will hear from leading experts in public policy, health care and aging, and the media. Alliance members will elect a president and secretary-treasurer, and community members will elect six community-based board members. To vote in the Alliance elections, conference attendees must be members of the Alliance by December 5, 2009. Hotel reservations must be made by contacting Bally's Las Vegas directly at 1-800-358-8777.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the next *Friday Alert* will be published on December 4, 2009. Have a Happy Thanksgiving!

This message is being sent to you as a member of the Alliance for Retired Americans. The Alliance is a nationwide membership organization organized under Internal Revenue Code 501 (c) (4) and dedicated to educating all Americans about and advocating on behalf of retirees and seniors. The Alliance is responsible for the content and has paid all costs associated with the preparation and distribution of this message.