

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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December 4, 2009

Senate Takes Center Stage in Health Care Reform Effort

The U.S. Senate moved forward on landmark health care legislation this week. On Thursday, a motion by Sen. **John McCain** (R-AZ) to send the Senate health care bill back to the Finance Committee and restore Medicare Advantage subsidies and other cuts to providers failed, with 42 senators voting yes and 58 voting no. The Alliance had sent a letter to the Senate on Tuesday saying that the McCain motion would, for the first time, subject Medicare Part D prescription drug premiums to means testing, causing a rise in premiums for many older Americans. In addition, the McCain motion would have continued the wasteful Medicare Advantage overpayments that currently threaten the financial stability of the Medicare Trust Fund. Two Democrats, **Ben Nelson** of Nebraska and **Jim Webb** of Virginia, voted with the 40 Republicans in favor of the motion. A complete tally of the vote is available at <http://bit.ly/6iG8uT>.

On Wednesday, **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance, spoke at a U.S. Senate press conference in support of Sen. **Michael Bennet's** amendment to keep Medicare savings in Medicare. Mr. Coyle joined Sen. Bennet (D-CO), Sen. **Tom Harkin** (D-IA), and Sen. **Chris Dodd** (D-CT) in calling on the Senate to reject the McCain motion and pass the Bennet Amendment that protects seniors and strengthens Medicare for years to come. "Senator Bennet's amendment guarantees no benefit cuts and keeps Medicare savings in Medicare. The McCain motion reduces the help Medicare provides for seniors, while it increases the profits the big insurance companies make on the backs of seniors and all taxpayers," said Mr. Coyle, who also appeared on MSNBC's "The **Nancy Snyderman Show**" on Thursday to discuss the McCain motion. The Senate voted 100-0 later on Thursday to approve the amendment by Sen. Bennet, ensuring that the reform bill would not cut guaranteed Medicare benefits. Senators Harkin and Bennet noted the Alliance's efforts on the Senate floor, as did Sen. **Debbie Stabenow** (D-MI).

According to *The New York Times*, the Senate majority leader, **Harry Reid** (D-NV), told Democrats in a closed-door meeting of his caucus on Thursday that Republicans were not interested in passing a bill. He said the Democrats must stick together and should be ready to work weekends to finish the bill before Christmas.

Alliance Remains Active in Health Reform During the Holiday Season

The Alliance has created a new fact sheet that lists the benefits to seniors of H.R. 3590, the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2009 (PPACA)," the health reform bill that is making its way through the U.S. Senate. To view it, go to <http://bit.ly/6wAt6a>. The Alliance is also engaging in a holiday card campaign in many states; a holiday-themed card has been developed for Alliance members to sign and mail to the state office of their members of Congress. There are two types of messaging: (1) a thank you, for House Democrats who voted "Yes" on

health reform; and (2) a card encouraging a "Yes" vote for House Democrats who voted no, as well as for Senators. Additionally, there is a large 18 by 24 inch card that will be hand-delivered to targeted members of Congress.

Medicare Drug Costs on the Rise; New Year Offers Chance to Change Plans Now

Each year, Medicare drug plans change what they charge and what they cover. As the average premium for Medicare drug plans is slated to increase 11% in 2010 [<http://bit.ly/5NtJJx>], seniors may have more of a reason to investigate switching to a more affordable drug plan [<http://bit.ly/5Nslxz>]. From November 15th through December 31st, seniors have the opportunity to investigate costs and change their plan coverage. "You may be able to save money by changing plans now," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

Spotlight: Nevada and Pennsylvania

Last Monday, the Nevada Alliance, led by President **Scotty Watts**, filed a complaint with the Nevada Attorney General and requested an investigation into the funding behind misleading ads attacking U.S. Rep. **Dina Titus** (D-NV) for supporting the Affordable Health Care for America Act. The complaint requests an investigation into whether insurance companies doing business in Nevada contributed to recent "60 Plus Association" ads condemning health reform as bad for seniors [<http://bit.ly/7kNeic>]. In Pennsylvania, Alliance Treasurer **Mike Doyle** and other PARA members are present at President **Obama's** appearance today in Schnecksville (near Allentown). Pennsylvania Alliance activists have looked forward to the remarks of President Obama at Lehigh County Community College, which will cover a wide variety of topics. More info can be obtained after the event here: [<http://ara.typepad.com>].

Sign Up Now for the Alliance's National Convention in Las Vegas

Mark your calendars for April 5-8, 2010 to attend the Alliance's National Convention in Las Vegas, where we will kick off our grassroots efforts for the 2010 elections. Details about the conference are 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.

Did You Know...

A new study of Senate voting patterns shows the chamber has approved more than 97 percent of all bills subject to a cloture motion to begin debate (*Roll Call*). The Senate's health care reform bill falls into that category. "Alliance members have done great work in support of health care reform so far. We can't stop now!" said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance.