

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Guiding Principles for Medicare Released as Program Celebrates its 43rd Birthday

The Alliance marked the 43rd birthday of Medicare on Wednesday with celebrations around the country and the release of a comprehensive roadmap for the program's future in Washington, DC. The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), representing 56 national senior membership organizations – including the Alliance - committed to the well-being of America's seniors, announced a set of principles designed to guide Congress as it pursues the national goal of restoring the promise of Medicare. Medicare has been a cornerstone of the health and security of America's seniors since President **Lyndon B. Johnson** signed it into law on July 30, 1965, and the principles, available at <http://www.retiredamericans.org/ht/action/GetDocumentAction/i/7491>, address defined benefits, coverage, affordability, program administration, quality assurance, and financing and sustainability in order to have the program remain a success. "Thank you to Congress for recently overriding **President Bush's** veto of H.R. 6331, the 'Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008,'" said **Edward F. Coyle**, LCAO Chair and Executive Director of the Alliance. "That legislation has provided us with a springboard to look at what more we can do to keep Medicare strong, to make Medicare all that it has the potential to be." Birthday celebrations were held in several states; thanks and cakes were delivered to Reps. **Allen Boyd** and **Tim Mahoney** in Tallahassee and Palm Beach County, FL, while they were given to Reps. **Chris Murphy** and **Joe Courtney** in New Britain and Norwich, CT, in recognition of all of their efforts to improve the program and the overall health of seniors. At Medicare birthday events in Indianapolis, IN, and Pittsburgh, PA, all state, local, and federal officials were pressed to support seniors' issues.

House Report Finds Taxpayers Pay Up to 30% more for Prescriptions Under Part D

In a report released July 24, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform found that U.S. drug manufacturers are reaping a windfall from taxpayers when it comes to the privately administered Medicare Part D program. According to the report, taxpayers are paying up to 30% more for prescription drugs under Medicare's Part D program for seniors and the disabled than under the government's Medicaid program for the poor. This is attributable to the fact that Part D, which was enacted in January 2006, lacks Medicaid's stipulation that drug companies sell prescription drugs to the government at discounted prices. The report and its accompanying hearing echo the growing debate on privatization of programs such as Medicare.

Alliance Shapes Election Agenda with Platform Recommendations

The senior voice will be well represented in this year's presidential election, as representatives of the Alliance are addressing the Democratic Platform Committee. The Platform Committee outlines the positions of the Democratic Party, and it will set the Democratic agenda and priorities for 2008. **William G. Cea**, member of the Executive Board of the Alliance for Retired Americans

and an AFT (American Federation of Teachers) retiree, spoke to the platform committee in Florida about the unique “opportunity for our nation to address the needs of America’s seniors by protecting and strengthening Social Security and Medicare.” Today, Alliance Executive Director Edward F. Coyle will join other experts speaking at the committee’s final event, a national hearing in Cleveland, OH, where he will address the crossroads faced by today’s older Americans and the national struggle of retirees to afford health care, prescription drugs, gas, groceries, and home heating costs.

Active Grannies: the New Soccer Moms?

In the publication *Politico* on Tuesday, Democratic strategist **Mark Penn** wrote about the enormous importance of the senior vote in the race for president, especially in states like Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Penn declares that key swing voters in this election may be “active grannies” - empty-nesters who have found a new freedom in their lives after their kids have left, and who look at the world very differently than do their kids graduating college. Top issues in these “older grannies” lives include: making income after the age of 65, fighting age discrimination, getting plugged into technology, having access to the latest medical treatments and good doctors through Medicare, and dealing with their families’ being torn apart by career-driven migration. In the coming months, active grannies are expected to be major viewers of cable television, the conventions and the debates. Fifteen percent of seniors surveyed in a recent poll were undecided, and 4 to 5% of undecided senior voters could be enough to tip the election.

Alliance Charters its 30th State: Iowa!

On Monday, the Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans (IARA) held its founding convention in Des Moines, with members electing **Don Rowen** as President and **James Hughes** as Executive Vice President. In addition to Rowen and Hughes, convention attendees elected **Roberta Polzin** Secretary and **Keever Swenka** Treasurer. Five Congressional District Vice Presidents were also elected: **Wayne Gross**, **Joyce Hermanstorfer**, **Art Staggs**, **Dale Strucker**, and **William Biede**.

McCain’s Economic Adviser is “Father of Privatization”

Americans United for Change, a group that the Alliance joined in thwarting President Bush’s efforts to privatize Social Security in 2005, warned the nation last Friday that **Sen. McCain** has hired **Martin Feldstein** as his economic adviser. Feldstein is the father of the misguided proposal to privatize Social Security. In 2005, *The San Francisco Chronicle* quoted Feldstein as saying, “I’ve always been opposed to Social Security. I think it’s a very unethical program.” **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance, said, “Such quotes echo John McCain’s recent statements on Social Security, in which he called the system ‘an absolute disgrace.’ Many seniors would have lost thousands in the stock market in recent years if privatization had been in effect.”

Did You Know...

In the 2002 elections, 14% of voters nationwide cast early ballots. This time, over 30% of ballots will be cast early, and that portion could be as high as a third (*USA Today*).