



FRIDAY ALERT

Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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Headlines:

House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan Releases Anti-Poverty Proposal

Medicare Pilot Program Scraps Hospital Stay Requirement for Skilled Nursing Care

Members of Congress Form Medicaid Expansion Caucus

Senate Committee Examines Social Security Disability Insurance

Next Week: Social Security and Medicare Trustees Report, Medicare's 49th Birthday

Vote for Illinois Alliance Member Katie Jordan as Your Hero

California Alliance Member Charlie Williams Passes Away

Fiesta Attends APWU Retirees Conference

Here is your July 25 Friday Alert:

House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan Releases Anti-Poverty Proposal

On Thursday, Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) unveiled a new proposal to overhaul federal anti-poverty programs and shift more control to individual states. Under Ryan's plan, most of the federal government's anti-poverty programs, including food stamps and housing vouchers, would be consolidated into a single program that would be overseen more closely at the state level. States would be given block grants from the federal government along with broad discretion on how to spend the money. The federal government would still have to approve state-level plans for allocating the funds. Although Ryan says his current plan will not cut funding, as Chairman of the House Budget Committee he has authored multiple previous budget documents that significantly reduced federal spending on programs aimed at America's poor. Earlier this year, Rep. Ryan drew fire on the issue when he commented that a "tailspin of culture, in our inner cities" contributed to entrenched poverty. For more on Ryan's proposal, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lmmhd83>.

“In April, Rep. Paul Ryan released a budget that would send millions of seniors straight into poverty,” said Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance. “For him to now pretend he has the solution to the poverty problem in America is ludicrous.”

Medicare Pilot Program Scraps Hospital Stay Requirement for Skilled Nursing Care

In a pilot program created under the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, some Medicare patients are being exempted from a controversial requirement that seniors be admitted to the hospital for at least three days in order to qualify for coverage of follow-up skilled nursing facility (SNF) care. The requirement has drawn scrutiny in recent months as thousands of Medicare patients have discovered they were ineligible for coverage of medically necessary skilled nursing care as a result of spending time in the hospital under “observation status.” Patients held under observation status are considered outpatients during hospital stays. According to The Washington Post, in the last six years the number of observation status patients ineligible for Medicare-covered SNF care has increased by 88%. Medicare officials say that the pilot program may be expanded nationwide if it leads to improved care and cost savings. For more on the program, go to <http://tinyurl.com/nak9hgb> .

“The abuse of ‘observation status’ should not stand between seniors and medically necessary care. By removing the hospital stay requirement, this program will hopefully improve seniors’ access to the Medicare benefits they have earned,” said Barbara J. Easterling, President of the Alliance.

Members of Congress Form Medicaid Expansion Caucus

Thirty-three members of Congress have joined together to form the State Medicaid Expansion Caucus chaired by Reps. Hank Johnson (D-GA) and G.K. Butterfield (D-NC). Caucus members will speak regularly on the House floor about the importance of expanding Medicaid and will be urging constituents to press state legislatures to take up the issue. Although the Affordable Care Act made federal funds available for states to expand Medicaid rolls in order to provide health coverage to millions of low-income Americans, the Supreme Court later ruled that states may opt out of the Medicaid expansion. Twenty-three states have so far refused to accept federal money to expand the health care program. “By refusing to expand Medicaid, these state governments are denying health care to millions of our most vulnerable citizens and hurting their own state economies,” said Ruben Burks, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. To read an op-ed from Rep. Johnson on the issue, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lb2n88y> .

Senate Committee Examines Social Security Disability Insurance

On Thursday, the Senate Finance Committee held a hearing entitled “Social Security: A Fresh Look at Workers’ Disability Insurance,” examining the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program. Witness testimony focused on the importance of SSDI in the lives of disabled workers along with growth and financing challenges for the program. In his opening remarks, Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) warned of attempts by Republicans to dismantle the broader Social Security system through attacks on the SSDI program. Around 8.9 million disabled American workers receive SSDI benefits, with an average benefit of around \$1145 a month. To read Sen. Brown’s full opening statement to the committee, go to <http://tinyurl.com/krvw4l3> .

Next Week: Social Security and Medicare Trustees Report, Medicare’s 49th Birthday

On Monday, July 28th, the Social Security and Medicare Board of Trustees will release their annual report on the current and projected financial outlooks for the two programs. The report will provide long term projections for the financial health of the programs stretching 75 years into the future. Last year’s report projected that the Social Security trust fund would be able to maintain current benefits levels through 2033 while the Medicare Trust Fund, which covers hospital care, was projected to fully cover benefits through 2026 – two years later than forecast the previous year. The Alliance will issue a statement on Monday in response to this year’s projections. Also next week: Activists will celebrate Medicare’s 49th birthday with events across the country!

Vote for Illinois Alliance Member Katie Jordan as Your Hero

Illinois Alliance member Katie Jordan was recently honored with a tribute written by her youngest granddaughter, Alitra ‘A.J.’ Jordan. In the piece, Alitra describes her grandmother’s trail-blazing life including experiences as the first African-American woman elected to the posts of secretary, vice-president, and president of her local union (Workers United/SEIU). Alitra’s story has been submitted to an online contest looking for inspiring stories about grandparents. To read the story and cast a vote for “Granny Honey” as your hero, go to <http://tinyurl.com/k9t67w3> .

California Alliance Member Charlie Williams Passes Away

Charles F. (“Charlie”) Williams, a beloved member of the California Alliance and the former Chairman of the Field Mobilization Committee for the national Alliance, passed away on Sunday at the age of 83. “Charlie was a founding member of the Alliance, and he had a lot of friends with us both in Washington and in California,” said Mr. Fiesta. “He was instrumental in establishing many state Alliances and getting us off the ground. Our deepest condolences go out to his family.” For a photo of Charlie, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lxwmnau> .

Fiesta Attends APWU Retirees Conference

Mr. Fiesta traveled to Chicago on Saturday for the American Postal Workers Retirees Conference.

For a printable version of this document, go to <http://bit.ly/1riu8mg> .

For the Alliance's Spanish language page, which includes last week's Friday Alert in Spanish, go to www.alianzadejubilados.org