



MONDAY ALERT

New York State Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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Press Conference for NYSARA And Partners Age Strong New York Coalition Held Last Tuesday

NYSARA and its partners had a press conference and follow up legislator meetings on Tuesday February 11. NYSARA and its partners LiveOn NY, Lifespan, AARP, Association on Aging in New York, Statewide Senior Action Network and many other aging advocacy organizations rallied on the 4th floor of the NYS Capital for senior fairness.

The fact is that:

- seniors pay \$72 billion per year in State and Local taxes (41% of state and local taxes)
- Older New Yorkers contribute \$719 billion (43 percent) to the states GDP;
- Their spending supports almost 6 million jobs.
- They generate \$482 billion in wages and salary,
- More than 4.1 million New Yorkers provide uncompensated care to someone else, most of which are older adults caring for older adults, with an economic value if paid for at the market rate of \$39 billion.
- People over 60 are currently almost 25% of NYS population

With all the contributions that seniors make it is unfair that the NYS Office for the Aging's budget is only .08% of the NYS

budget NYSOFA provides services to seniors that allow them to survive and age at home in dignity. Meanwhile seniors fall short in affordable housing and services that enable them to age at home with dignity. These critical services have significant waiting lists to receive these services.

The Age Strong coalition is asking for Seniors to be a priority in New York State. Priorities are proven by fiscal commitment to older adults. The Governor provided \$45 million to end service wait lists for community based aging services to ensure that older adults receive timely, essential care. The Age Strong Coalition is asking for an additional \$44 million added to the proposed NYS budget for:

- \$2 million to create a Resident Assistant Program in Affordable Senior Housing that ensures older adults can age safely with access to light touch, non medical services.
- \$875,000 to fund elder abuse programs
- \$15 million too support guardianship reform through Statewide initiatives of Non Profit guardians to insure that all New Yorkers who need a surrogate decision maker have access to qualified person centered care.
- \$3 million investment in the Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP). This program assists the enrollment of New Yorkers into Medicare cost saving programs, reducing annual health care expenses by \$7,300 per person saving New Yorkers an additional \$7 million next year. The patients rights Hotline with \$500,000 in new funding, will assist more patients statewide in asserting their health care rights. \$1.5 million for legal services for the elderly will empower community agencies to provide free legal aid for housing, medical debt, credit and other pressing issues, ensuring older adults age with dignity and security.

- \$12.5 million to increase the Long Term Care Ombudsman (LTCOP) Program to address the complaints of residents of long term care facilities. The program is severely underfunded. The program needs more professional staff to conduct weekly visits so all facilities can have regular ombudsman presence leading to improved quality of care.

It is **CRITICAL** that all NYSARA members contact their State Assembly member and State Senator by letter, e-mail, phone or in person to emphasize the Age Strong Message and that New York's Seniors **are** important. Additionally we should lobby for tier 6 reform, maintenance of health benefits for retirees, increasing compensation for caregivers and safe staffing enforcement at hospitals and nursing homes.

If you would like to see a video of the Age Strong press conference where NYSARA President Barry Kaufmann is front and center go to our website at www.nystate.retiredamericans.org.

Flu Hits New Yorkers Hard This Season Be Sure to Protect Yourself

New York is seeing its worst flu-season in 15 years, largely mirroring the national trend. More than 3,100 people have been hospitalized, causing a log jam in many health care facilities.

Fewer than 25 percent of New Yorkers have received the annual vaccination this season even though it can significantly reduce the risk of infection or make the symptoms less severe. Seniors are at higher risk, especially those with other underlying conditions.

If you haven't received the flu vaccination this year, check with your health care provider and seek guidance for your own well-being. It's easy, painless and effective.

<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/ny-experiencing-worst-flu-season-least-15-years-20163112.php>

Medicare Rights: Dear Marci

Dear Marci,

I turned 65 last year but didn't sign up for Medicare Part B right away, because I am still working and have employer-sponsored health insurance. A friend mentioned that I might have to pay a late enrollment penalty since I missed my Initial Enrollment Period. Is this true?

- Nereyda (Montclair, NJ)

Dear Nereyda,

Great question! Since you are actively working and covered by your employer-sponsored health insurance, you can enroll in Medicare Part B without penalty using a [Special Enrollment Period \(SEP\)](#). The SEP allows you to sign up for Part B anytime while you are still covered by the employer's health plan or within eight months after your employment-based coverage ends. If you enroll during this period, you won't owe an LEP.

Even though it sounds like you shouldn't owe a Part B LEP, it can be helpful to know how these penalties work. Here is some additional information about LEPs:

- 1. Part B late enrollment penalty**

You may owe a [Part B LEP](#) if you delay enrolling in Medicare Part B after you are first eligible. For each 12-month period you delay enrollment, you will

owe a 10% Part B premium penalty. So, if you delay enrollment for 24 months, you will owe the normal premium amount for Part B, plus an additional 20%.

However, you shouldn't owe an LEP if:

- You have [insurance from your or your spouse's current work](#) and have been continuously covered since becoming Medicare-eligible (with no more than eight consecutive months without coverage from either Medicare or insurance from current work)
- You are eligible for a [Medicare Savings Program \(MSP\)](#)
- You qualify for a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) because of exceptional circumstances.

2. **Part D Late Enrollment Penalty**

You may owe an [Part D LEP](#) if you delay enrolling in Medicare Part D after you are first eligible for it. For each month you delay [enrollment](#), 1% of the Part D base premium is added to your regular Part D premium.

However, you shouldn't owe an LEP if:

- You had [creditable drug coverage](#) during the time you delayed enrolling in Part D
- You qualify for the [Extra Help program](#)
- You can prove that you received inadequate or inaccurate information about whether your drug coverage was creditable.

Most people don't owe a premium for Part A because of their or their spouse's Social Security work history. If you do owe a premium for Part A, you could owe a Part A LEP if you delay enrollment. Visit the [Medicare](#) website to find out more about Part A LEP.

Hope this helps!

- Marci

Republicans Release Dueling Budget Blueprints That Call for Massive Cuts to Health Care and Food Assistance

On Wednesday, House Republicans [unveiled a Fiscal Year 2025 budget resolution](#). The plan calls for \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts and slashing federal spending by \$2 trillion. The \$2 trillion in cuts would come from “mandatory spending” on federal food assistance, Medicare, Social Security, and/or Medicaid but the budget resolution does not specify exactly how much would be cut from each.

Meanwhile, Senate Republicans also [released](#) their budget resolution. The Senate resolution is more narrow and focuses on more spending on immigration enforcement and national security and has already passed the Senate Budget Committee.

Both chambers must reach an agreement on the budget resolution before moving on to drafting bills to enact specific tax or spending cuts.

“We don’t need any more details to see that tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans and corporations are going to be paid for by older Americans and the most vulnerable in our society,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Poll after poll shows that the American people do not want cuts to Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid and think the wealthiest Americans should pay more in taxes, not less. It’s going to be a tough fight but one we are ready for.”

Alliance Members Join Protests Across the Country

Alliance members and allies in the labor movement are braving the cold and speaking out against the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), run by **Elon Musk**, this week.

Members of the DOGE team have been placed in federal government

agencies and departments, accessed personal data, fired thousands of federal workers, and illegally halted payments for spending that Congress approved prompting numerous lawsuits and criticism.

President Trump signed a new executive order Tuesday giving Musk and DOGE more power, specifically over the size of the federal workforce. The order directs agencies to “undertake plans for large-scale reductions in force” and “coordinate and consult with DOGE” as they work to shrink the size of the workforce.



MD/DC Alliance President **Carol Rosenblatt** and Alliance members joined a “Billionaires out, workers in!” protest at the Department of Labor (DOL) last week. Kentucky Alliance President **Kirk Gillenwaters** and Alliance members participated in a “Stop Elon Musk” rally in Louisville with more than 500 activists – including American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) members, seniors, teachers, and youth – at the IBEW Local 369 Union Hall to protest DOGE, Elon Musk, and Project 2025. Rep. **Morgan McGarvey** (KY) delivered remarks on the unconstitutional actions taken by DOGE and the Trump Administration over the past week.

The momentum continued this week when members of Congress and labor leaders rallied outside the Social Security Administration (SSA) headquarters in Woodlawn, Maryland, demanding that **Musk** and DOGE not mess with Americans' earned benefits. Alliance Executive Director **Rich Fiesta** spoke to AFGE retirees during the union's Legislative Conference Retiree Workshop in Washington, DC on Tuesday and accompanied them to Capitol Hill to meet with their representatives.

Alliance Western Regional board member **Steve Kofahl**, a retired SSA employee, joined a press conference with Washington Senator **Patty Murray** on Wednesday warning that SSA field offices could be closed and beneficiaries may have to wait longer for help from the agency.

"No one is against cutting wasteful government spending. But **Elon Musk** and his DOGE operatives should not have unfettered access to Americans' private, personal data and should not be able to block spending that Congress has approved," said Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.** "We are grateful to our members for showing up and standing up for federal workers and all Americans."

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is Confirmed by the Senate

On Thursday, the U.S. Senate [voted to confirm](#) **Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.** as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). The vote was 52 to 48, with Sen. Mitch McConnell (KY) joining all Democrats in opposition.

He was confirmed despite concerns over his management experience, lack of knowledge of Medicare and Medicaid, and anti-vaccine positions. Kennedy will also be responsible for the Medicare drug price negotiation program.

Although at times President Trump has voiced support for negotiating lower drug prices, during Kennedy's confirmation hearings, he [did](#)

not provide senators with any assurances about the future of Medicare drug price negotiations.

“Secretary Kennedy has long been a critic of the pharmaceutical industry,” said Alliance Secretary-Treasurer **Joseph Peters, Jr.** “We hope that he will embrace the power that he has under the law to lower prescription drug prices and make healthcare more affordable for seniors and taxpayers.”

Oklahoma Retirees Form 40th State Alliance Chapter

On Monday, the Oklahoma Alliance held its founding convention at Teamsters 886 Union Hall in Oklahoma City.

Executive Director Fiesta gave a presentation on retiree issues. **Tim O’Connor** (Central Oklahoma Labor



Federation) was elected Executive Director Fiesta gave a presentation on retiree issues. **Tim O’Connor** (Central Oklahoma Labor Federation) was elected President, **Sabra Tucker** (Oklahoma Retired Educators Association) was elected Secretary, and **Dennis Hanson** (Teamsters) was elected Treasurer.

Alliance Releases 2024 Activity Report

The Alliance published its [2024 Activity Report](#) detailing the progress made in the fight for retirement security last year. From the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act to electing pro-retiree candidates to office and standing up for voting rights, it was a productive year.

“Our work would not be possible without continued support from our members,” said Alliance President **Roach**. “We appreciate the opportunity to advocate for older Americans and look forward to continuing that work for years to come.”