



MONDAY ALERT

New York State Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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March 31, 2025

Project 2025 is Alive and Well in America

Remember during the campaign Project 2025, designed and published by the Conservative organization the Heritage Foundation when many were worried. President Trump disavowed any knowledge of it despite the fact that it had policies that Trump had attempted to implement in his first term and that a large percentage of the writers of Project 2025 had either served in his first administration or are serving in critical positions in his second administration.

Here we are 71 days into the new administration and seemingly at warp speed many of the policy initiatives found in Project 2025 have been implemented. Most illegally. Let's look at just a few that impact Seniors..

- **Block granting and capping federal funding of Medicaid** - in process with the massive up to \$880 billion cut in Medicaid funding to finance a \$4.2 trillion tax cut for billionaires and multi-national corporations.
- **Outlaw all Federal Public Unions** - In process with the new Executive order detailed in the article below by AFGE National President, Everett Kelly.
- **Giving States the Ability to outlaw ALL Unions** - Not yet formally started

- **Fire all Civil Service employees and replace them with Political Appointments** - Not all yet but a significant number of civil servants fired or furloughed crippling functioning government especially in Health services, Social Security and Veterans Affairs. Essentially, by these cuts they have gotten rid of expertise, institutional knowledge, scientific knowledge and expertise that will take decades to reinstall.
- **Get rid of the Department of Education** - Done (Illegally) subject to actions of Congress
- **Making Medicare Advantage (Corporate insurance with corporate profit motives) the default enrollment option for new enrollees** - Not yet started but don't assume this won't happen in the near future. If you wanted to really address waste fraud and abuse in government funding regulating and cracking down on companies that provide Medicare Advantage would potentially save hundreds of billions of dollars.

AFGE President Everett Kelly Issues Strong Rebuke to Retaliatory Executive Order Targeting Federal Employees Union Rights

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) National President Everett Kelley issued the following statement in response to President Trump's latest executive action attacking the collective bargaining rights of over one million federal employees:

"President Trump's latest executive order is a disgraceful and retaliatory attack on the rights of hundreds of thousands of patriotic American civil servants—nearly one-third of whom are veterans—simply because they are members of a union that stands up to his harmful policies.

"This administration's bullying tactics represent a clear threat not just to federal employees and their unions, but to every American who values democracy and the freedoms of speech and association. Trump's threat to unions and working people across America is clear: fall in line or else.

"These threats will not work. Americans will not be intimidated or silenced. AFGE isn't going anywhere. Our members have bravely served this nation, often putting themselves in harm's way, and they deserve far better than this blatant attempt at political punishment.

"AFGE is preparing immediate legal action and will fight relentlessly to protect our rights, our members, and all working Americans from these unprecedented attacks."

Fast Facts: Federal Sector Collective Bargaining

1. Federal unions cannot negotiate over pay, benefits, or hiring/firing decisions.

- Unlike private-sector unions, federal unions are limited to bargaining over conditions of employment—not wages, benefits, or classifications, which are set by law and Congress.

2. **Federal employees are prohibited by law from striking.

- Under 5 U.S.C. § 7311, federal workers are legally barred from striking, and doing so can result in termination and a ban from federal employment.

3. Nearly one-third of federal employees are veterans.

- Many federal workers are former service members who bring leadership, discipline, and mission commitment to their civilian roles. Stripping their bargaining rights is a betrayal of that service.

4. **Collective bargaining is governed by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978.**
 - This bipartisan law created a structured process for federal workers to address workplace issues without disrupting government operations.
5. **Unions improve agency performance—not hinder it.**
 - Collective bargaining helps resolve conflicts early, reduces costly litigation, improves retention, and boosts morale—all of which support better public service.
6. **Removing bargaining rights opens the door to abuse.**
 - Without union representation, employees—especially whistleblowers and veterans—lose vital protections from retaliation and political interference.
7. **Federal unionism has broad historical support.**
 - Presidents from both parties—Reagan, Clinton, Bush, Obama—have upheld the right of federal workers to union representation.

NYSARA Activists and Partners Protest Social Security Office Closing



A rally was held on Monday 3/21/2025 at the Social Security Office in Big Flats, NY. "HANDS OF OUR SOCIAL SECURITY " No Cuts - No Closures! The purpose of the rally was to support Social Security's staff by speaking about the proposed closing of our County Social Security Office!

We are concerned seniors who want to stand up to the Trump/Musk proposed cuts because our Congressman, Nick Langworthy won't! Retiree groups involved are PEF Retirees, **New York State Alliance for Retired Americans** and the AFT Retirees Chapter 4053R.

Langworthy has said it was proposed to close before he was elected! One of the organizers stopped in to speak with staff who told him they were in

limbo as to their status! But just recently in a contradictory statement he posted that it wasn't closing! Social Security is an earned benefit not an entitlement! Every American deserves a dignified retirement! Langworthy fails to represent average citizens who depend on Social Security! We need to speak with our elected representative about his position. We want to know what he is doing to stop these cruel efforts to eliminate Social Security and Medicare?

NYSARA President Speaks at Chapter 10/11 PEF Retiree Meeting

On Wednesday March 26 NYSARA President **Barry Kaufmann** spoke to about 150 PEF Retirees at PEF headquarters in lower Manhattan. The presentation was "Senior Issues 2025 and Beyond – They Really **DID** Mean What They Said.

Included in the presentation were senior issues at both the national and state level such as Social Security and the lies being told and why, the importance and threats to Medicaid and what that means for the NYS budget, potential cuts or cost increases of Medicare, union and civil service protections, and housing and nutrition cuts/concerns.

All of this is an attempt to give a \$4.2 trillion tax cut largely for the very wealthy and multi-national corporations that blows a hole in the deficit while watching inflation and prices go up and the value of our 401k's go down.

After the presentation there was a very spirited discussion and questions with the participants expressing real concern about where as a country we are headed.

Medicare Advantage Costs and Growth Largely Unexamined

By Lindsey Copeland and our Friends at Medicare Rights

A new [KFF report](#) examines the increased role of Medicare Advantage (MA) in the coverage landscape and the potential impact of Trump administration policies on MA enrollment and cost growth. The paper comes as Congress [considers](#) President Trump's nominee to lead the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid, Dr. Mehmet Oz.

Medicare Advantage's Growing Role in Coverage

The share of Medicare beneficiaries with MA has more than doubled since 2010. KFF notes that while this enrollment growth is likely due to many factors, “none may be greater than the appeal of potentially lower costs and extra benefits like dental coverage and debit cards, offered by Medicare Advantage plans [and aggressively marketed](#) by brokers and insurers.”

However, [these enticements are largely paid for by inflated payments to MA plans](#).

Public Medicare dollars are funding ‘extras’ for MA enrollees that are not available to people with Original Medicare.

In other words, public Medicare dollars are funding “extras” for MA enrollees that are unavailable to people with Original Medicare. According to a [recent report](#) from the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC), an independent agency that advises Congress on Medicare payment issues, Medicare overpayments are “the primary source of funding for supplemental benefits...and better financial protection for MA enrollees relative to beneficiaries in FFS.”

In 2025, MedPAC estimates that Medicare will pay 20% more for MA enrollees than for similar people enrolled in Original Medicare, at a cost of \$84 billion.

The overpayments are staggering. In 2025, MedPAC estimates that Medicare [will pay](#) 20% more for MA enrollees than for similar people enrolled in Original Medicare, at a cost of \$84 billion. These excess dollars have system-wide implications, raising taxpayer costs and Part B premiums—by about \$13 billion this year alone—while worsening Medicare sustainability for current and future enrollees.

Key Questions Policymakers Should Address

Critically, the shift towards MA is occurring even though information about how the plans work for people is limited, and much of what we do know is [concerning](#). Further, it is happening in a largely unexamined way. KFF raises important and increasingly urgent questions about MA that policymakers are simply not debating:

“Should the payment system for Medicare Advantage plans be modified, and if so, how and to what end? What should the role of traditional Medicare be nationwide and in rural areas where fewer beneficiaries are enrolled in Medicare Advantage? Should traditional Medicare be strengthened, with additional benefits and an out-of-pocket cap, so beneficiaries have a meaningful choice when comparing Medicare coverage options? What more should be done to help beneficiaries understand the tradeoffs between traditional Medicare and Medicare Advantage, including the potential for extra benefits and lower costs in Medicare Advantage versus challenges that may arise due to limited provider networks and [prior authorization requirements](#)?”

Congress and the Administration's Policy Choices

The new Congress and administration will have the opportunity to consider these issues and pursue policy changes aligning with their vision. For instance, KFF suggests policymakers could choose to prioritize savings and efficiencies, including by improving MA payment accuracy through the [annual rate notice](#), “ending the quality bonus program that increases

Medicare spending by nearly [\\$12 billion](#) a year or capping [Medicare Advantage benchmarks](#) at 100 percent of local traditional Medicare costs except in areas with low Medicare Advantage penetration.” Instead, they may focus on further increasing MA’s footprint, payments, and costs, such as by rolling back beneficiary protections against aggressive MA marketing or testing ways to make MA the default enrollment option.

Dr. Oz is expected to help shape the path forward if he is confirmed. But his immediate goals are not yet clear. Although he has been a vocal supporter of MA, having “promoted Medicare Advantage in [co-authored papers](#), [interviews](#) and [on his television show](#),” in his March 14 confirmation [hearing](#) before the Senate Finance Committee, he [acknowledged](#) problems with MA overpayments and pledged to scrutinize [some MA abuses](#).

While MA policy directions are unsettled, it is clear they deserve serious and public debate.

The Need for a Public Debate on MA Policy

While MA policy directions are unsettled, they clearly deserve serious and public debate. At Medicare Rights, we want people with Medicare to have access to coverage that works for them. But we are [deeply concerned](#) that MA plan payments and behaviors are driving up the cost of health care for people with Medicare, their families, and all taxpayers, as well as fueling enrollee [problems](#) with understanding, navigating, and accessing care. These dynamics will only entrench as MA plan and enrollment numbers grow, and [both are surging](#). Congress and the administration must effectively respond to these realities and to the concerns many have about [rising Medicare costs](#), [the program’s future](#), and the [need for solutions](#).

Social Security Administration Rolls Back Plan to End Telephone Service for People with Disabilities After Criticism

On Wednesday, the Social Security Administration [partially reversed its plan](#) to eliminate telephone services and implement an online identity

verification system. People applying for disability benefits will still be able to apply for benefits and verify their identity over the telephone. People applying for retirement or survivor benefits, however, will still be required to apply for benefits and verify their identity online or in person starting April 15, 2025.

“We are grateful that SSA officials listened to the Alliance and partially addressed our concerns about their plan to eliminate phone services for Americans who rely on them,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “This is another example of how effective advocacy can achieve results. Our members will never stop fighting to ensure Americans can access the Social Security benefits they have earned over a lifetime of work.”

Retirees Shouldn't Count on Frank Bisignano to Stop Musk's Destruction of the Social Security Administration

Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance, [issued the following statement](#) regarding Frank Bisignano's confirmation hearing before the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday:

“Retirees who tuned into **Frank Bisignano's** confirmation hearing hoping to hear that he planned on halting the chaos and destruction of the Social Security Administration caused by **Elon Musk's** DOGE team were left disappointed.



Mr. Bisignano refused to contradict Musk's claim that Social Security is a criminal Ponzi scheme or even acknowledge that a person whose benefit claim takes 3 months longer to complete simply because of new DOGE-imposed changes had experienced a cut in the benefits they earned.

Mr. Bisignano knows a lot about processing payments and came across as a big fan of artificial intelligence in call centers. Unfortunately, he said nothing to assure older Americans that he gets the unique challenges technology presents to Social Security beneficiaries, who are older and have less access to or familiarity with technology.

We urge members of the Senate to reject his confirmation.”

Department of Health and Human Services Restructuring Threatens Critical Services for Older Americans; Administration Moves to Gut Collective Bargaining for Federal Workers

On Thursday, Secretary of Health and Human Services **Robert Kennedy, Jr.** [announced](#) a massive reorganization effort that includes cutting 10,000

staff members from the agency and dismantling the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

[Operating as a division](#) of HHS, the ACL funds services and invests in research to promote the health and well-being of older Americans and people with disabilities. It helps seniors stay in their homes, access medical care, and supports essential programs like Meals on Wheels and local senior centers.

It [also runs](#) the Administration on Aging (AoA), which was created to oversee community social service programs established by the Older Americans Act. The AoA partners with a network of federal, state, and local organizations to administer these programs, [which help](#) about 7 million seniors and their caregivers.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), National Institutes of Health (NIH), and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [will face](#) the deepest cuts, with 3,500 workers terminated from the FDA, 2,400 from the CDC, and 1,200 from the NIH. About 300 staffers will be cut from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) as well.

“The ACL offers a network of support that millions of older Americans use every day from senior centers to rides to home meal delivery to medical appointments,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Eliminating this division’s work will reduce efficiency and sends an alarming message to seniors and their families that they are on their own.”

Meanwhile, the president targeted federal workers across the federal government, signing an executive order that strips the fundamental right to unionize and collectively bargain for staff at more than 30 agencies. AFGE announced it will pursue legal action to block the executive order.

Alliance Members Mobilize Against Social Security Attacks

Alliance members across the country took action this week to speak out against the Department of Government Efficiency's (DOGE) dismantling of the Social Security Administration. Yesterday, Florida Alliance members, including **Barbara DeVane**, [protested](#) outside Rep. Neal Dunn's (FL) office in Tallahassee to rally against looming Social Security cuts and demand that he take action to stop them.

Earlier in the week, Wisconsin Alliance President **Ross Winklbauer** [spoke about](#) **Frank Bisignano**'s confirmation hearing and the importance of Social Security for seniors on the Today Show. New York State Alliance President **Barry Kaufmann**



delivered remarks at a “Hands Off Social Security” rally in White Plains this past weekend, and the Texas Alliance turned out to support Environmental Protection Agency workers. Iowa Alliance President **Ken Sagar** joined the AFL-CIO for a Zoom Town Hall and Phone Bank.



The Alliance, together with AFGE, AFSCME, and AFT, led a virtual phone bank on Thursday and made hundreds of calls to raise awareness about threats to Social Security benefits. The next virtual phone bank will be April 11. Please stay tuned for registration details.