



# MONDAY ALERT

New York State Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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April 14, 2025

## Medicaid cuts to NY State

As the federal cuts continue to loom, what we are learning are the four key ways that the feds will try to target medicaid in NYS:

1. Feds are looking to reduce their federal share of the NY Medicaid program (they currently pay 50%, they want to pay 40%) including not paying 90% of the "new" Medicaid recipients that were added due to the ACA expansion.
2. Setting per capita limits on medicaid expenditures.
3. Adding work requirements.
4. Expanded service cuts to populations that New York can add due to waivers. For example, non-citizens.

**From Jim Carr,  
NYS PEF President and NYSARA Board Member**

I'm reaching out asking for your support to form a coalition to advocate for Union Retirees. Specifically for a change in the way COLA is calculated. And a Health Care Insurance Protection Bill! Please share this information with your members.

Due to the late budget negotiations this year, State senators and Assemblymembers have just weeks left this session to debate additional

bills addressing the needs of New Yorkers. PEF's legislative team is hard at work pushing the union's priorities, but as always, lawmakers tend to listen to the people who actually elect them!

So please take a moment today to send an email to your local legislators letting them know you support retiree bills. I'm asking for your support for PEF's permanent COLA Bill. We are stronger together. Please feel free to share this message with family, friends, and social media to amplify and supplement your efforts.

We are working to change the way COLA is calculated for retirees! We urge you all to join us in advocating for a secure retirement for all!. We are stronger together!

Below are our two top retiree's issues (These will be on tap AFTER the Budget is passed (Currently still in discussion):

**Health Insurance Protection (Draft needing correction as per NYS AFL-CIO)** - Prohibits expansion or changes in health insurance premium costs to retirees without affirmative action by the Majority leader and the Speaker and limits application of health insurance changes in legislative pay bills to affected units only. **\$0 cost item**

**Improve Permanent COLA - Index Base Amount Draft** No cost analysis from last year - This legislation increases the maximum base amount (\$18,000) used to calculate the annual COLA by 50% of the average annual CPI BEFORE indexing annual for purposes of the current permanent COLA program.

## **COSTS**

**NYSTRS - \$88.8 million**

**SLERS - \$120 million**

**P&F - \$17.4 million**

**NYC - \$734.1 million**

## **NYSARA In Action...**

**Central New York Chapter of NYSARA Joins 4,000 at  
Syracuse Hands Off Rally**



# HANDS OFF

- Social Security
- Medicare
- Medicaid
- Veterans' Services
- Labor Unions
- Women's Rights
- Education
- Cancer Research
- Libraries
- Speech
- MUEL MAR



CNY NYSARA members Bill Spreter, (left to right) chapter President, joins Kathy Kelly and chapter Secretary, Lori Nilsson at the Syracuse Hands Off rally. Also present were Ed O'Rourke and Dan Gremillion.

Union supporters and NYSARA members rally against Trump's attacks on government workers in the Syracuse Hands Off Rally.

## **Hands Off! Town Hall, Staten Island NYC Chapter of NYSARA in the House**



Members of the NYC Chapter of NYSARA including Barbara Waldmann, President (far right)

In conjunction with massive National rallies on Saturday, Hands Off! NY-11 Fight Back held a standing-room- only town hall with an empty chair for an absent Nicole Malliotakis. The audience was composed largely of Senior citizens and was attended by NYC chapter of NYSARA president Barbara Waldmann and many retired city workers.

Republican representative Malliotakis, who has not held one town hall during her three terms in office, voted in February for a House bill that would result in vast cuts to Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), hospitals and health care centers, prescription drugs, nursing homes, home care services, veterans, 9/11 responders, education, and more. These "savings" would be earmarked to pay for tax cuts to major corporations and the wealthiest Americans. Protests were also voiced by the audience against the huge tariffs levied this week by the administration which will result in higher prices for imported goods, essentially amounting to a large tax increase for everyday citizens. Also questioned was the indiscriminate firings and the stripping away of essential services at the behest DOGE that has slashed many federal agencies.

Plans are being made for future public events and collective actions to continue the focus on the erosion of basic services by this administration and the Republican dominated Congress.

## **Central New York Chapter of NYSARA Rally Opposing Healthcare Cuts**



Pictured above are from left to right holding the banner are Dr. Richard Vennstra, President of the UUP chapter of Upstate University and Dan Gremillion, NYSARA, and with the Hands off poster, chapter President, Bill Spreter.

CNY NYSARA members join other Syracuse area advocacy groups in a rally opposing Federal healthcare cuts. The House majority recently passed a bill slashing \$880 billion in Medicaid cuts and Health and Human Services has fired 10,000 Federal employees.

**Dear Marci**

Dear Marci,

I'm having trouble getting my prescribed medication paid for when I go to the pharmacy. What can I do?

- Bernadette (Salisbury, NC)

Dear Bernadette,

Not being able to access your medication can be very stressful. There are a few steps you can take to identify the issue and to ensure you have uninterrupted access to your medication going forward:

- **Know your coverage:**

- Call your plan and check if there are any applicable [coverage restrictions](#). These are rules you must follow before your plan covers your drug.
- Call Medicare to learn about which part of Medicare should [cover your drug](#).
- Check to make sure your Part D drugs are on your plan's formulary, or list of covered drugs.

- **Make sure your pharmacist submits claims properly:**

- Your pharmacist could be billing your prescription to the wrong part of Medicare or without required documentation. This could explain a drug coverage denial or why your pharmacist is having trouble with your plan.
  - If your provider doesn't know how to submit these claims, they can reach out to your plan or to Medicare for help.

- **Make sure your provider or pharmacist has the documentation they need:**



- This is helpful for drugs that are covered differently depending on the situation.
  - For example: If Part B should cover your insulin because you use an infusion pump to take it, you may need to show proof that you have a pump.
- **Know your right to appeal:**
  - You have the right to appeal Medicare's or your plan's denial.
  - Ask your doctor to help prove your drug is medically necessary and that you meet the coverage criteria.

Hope this helps!

-Marci

## **House and Senate Pass Budget Resolution That Calls for Massive Medicaid and Tax Cuts**

On Thursday, the House of Representatives passed the GOP's Fiscal Year 2025 budget framework, with a 216-214 party-line vote. Only two Republicans, Reps. **Victoria Spartz** (IN) and **Thomas Massie** (KY), joined all Democrats in rejecting the resolution. The Senate approved the framework earlier in the week, with a 51-48 party-line vote. Sen. **Rand Paul** (KY) and all Senate Democrats voted no.

The blueprint calls for slashing at least \$1.5 trillion from programs like Medicaid and food assistance to fund \$1.5 trillion more in tax cuts for wealthy Americans and corporations. Now that both chambers have passed the framework, House and Senate committees will draft legislation for a single, unified reconciliation package of tax cuts, spending cuts, energy policy, border security investments, and new military spending.

House Republicans plan to finalize the bill by late May which will only require a simple majority of 51 Senate votes to pass.

However, multiple Republican senators [expressed concerns](#) against deep cuts to Medicaid this week, including **Susan Collins** (ME), **Josh Hawley** (MO), **Jim Justice** (WV), **Jerry Moran** (KS), and **Lisa Murkowski** (AK).

“It’s disgraceful to pay for more tax breaks for the wealthy by terminating health care and food assistance for older and working Americans,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “Please stay tuned for more developments on this spending package and be prepared to contact your members of Congress about this bad plan.”

## **SSA Backs Down on Plan to End Phone Service for Millions After Public Outcry**

On Tuesday, the Social Security Administration [reversed](#) its decision to end telephone services for processing benefit claims. Americans can continue to apply for retirement, survivor, or disability benefits through the method that works best for them—whether by phone, in person, or online. Beneficiaries will only be required to verify their identity in person if they are flagged as potential fraud risks.

“Organizing and mobilizing works. From the moment DOGE announced its dangerous plan to eliminate SSA telephone services, our members sprang into action—making thousands of calls to elected officials, organizing rallies and demonstrations, and demanding the protection of the services they have earned and paid for,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “We will continue to fight to ensure that SSA is fully staffed and that local field offices remain open and accessible to the public.”

**Take Action:** [Click HERE to tell your senators to vote NO](#) on Frank Bisignano to be SSA Commissioner.

The Social Security Administration is reeling from **Elon Musk's** Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) staff cuts that are threatening its ability to serve the public. **Frank Bisignano**, who calls himself a "DOGE guy," is the wrong person to lead the SSA. Please [take action](#) and tell your senator to vote NO on his confirmation.

## **Alliance Releases New Congressional Voting Record**

The Alliance [released](#) its 2024 [Congressional Voting Record](#), which scored each U.S. Senator and Representative on critical retirement security issues, on Thursday.

"Most members of Congress pay lip service to protecting seniors," said President **Roach**. "Our annual voting record shows which House and Senate members back up their words with actions and vote in older Americans' best interests."

The report assesses ten key Senate and House floor votes from 2024 that relate to older Americans. These include votes to ensure that 2.8 million public sector retirees and survivors receive the full Social Security benefits they've earned, to fund nutrition and health care programs that older Americans rely on, and to lower prescription drug prices.

"What House and Senate members do—or fail to do—in Washington has consequences for retirees and their families," said Executive Director **Fiesta**. "We will continue to track what our elected officials do so voters have the information they need."

Among the lawmakers earning a score of 90% or higher were **Ben Ray Luján** (NM), **Jon Ossoff** (GA), **Josh Harder** (CA), **Jahana Hayes** (CT), **Frank**

**Mrvan (IN), Gabe Vasquez (NM), Dina Titus (NV), Marcy Kaptur (OH), and Emilia Sykes (OH).**

Both the national 2024 Congressional Voting Record and individual reports for each state delegation, as well as past voting records are available on the [Alliance's website](#).



Top left: Florida Alliance Member Barbara DeVane joins protestors at the Hands Off rally in Tallahassee; Top right: Texas Alliance members hold a "Hands Off Social Security" rally in Dallas; Middle left: Michigan Alliance President Jim Pedersen holds a "No Social Security Cuts" sign at a rally in Niles; Lower left: Alliance members joined our "Save Social Security" phone bank on Thursday; Lower right: A California Alliance member stands with Rep. George Whitesides (CA) at "Hands Off" rally

## ***KFF Health News: Rural Hospitals Question Whether They Can Afford Medicare Advantage Contracts***

**By Arielle Zions**

Rural hospital leaders are questioning whether they can continue to afford to do business with Medicare Advantage companies, and some say the only way to maintain services and protect patients is to end their contracts with the private insurers.

Medicare Advantage plans pay hospitals lower rates than traditional Medicare, said Jason Merkley, CEO of Brookings Health System in South Dakota. Merkley worried the losses would spark staff layoffs and cuts to patient services. So last year, Brookings Health dropped all four contracts it had with major Medicare Advantage companies.

"I've had lots of discussions with CEOs and executive teams across the country in regard to that," said Merkley, whose health system operates a hospital and clinics in the small city of Brookings and surrounding rural areas.

Merkley and other rural hospital operators [in recent years](#) have enumerated a long list of concerns about the publicly funded, privately run health plans. In addition to the reimbursement issue, their complaints include payment delays and a resistance to authorizing patient care.

But rural hospitals abandoning their Medicare Advantage contracts can leave local patients without nearby in-network providers or force them to scramble to switch coverage.



