



# MONDAY ALERT

New York State Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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September 1, 2025

**Happy Labor Day!!!!**

Despite all the efforts on behalf of the Trump Administration to blunt or eliminate unions, especially federal unions as per Project 2025 guidance, Labor survives and thrives. On this day of recognition for working men and women we celebrate the contributions of labor to the American dream and its contributions to floating all boats at a higher level. On this very important day NYSARA joins in the celebration of all labor and working men and women have contributed to the success of this country and we join in resisting the efforts on behalf of this administration to diminish federal unions and workers.

## **Federal Employees in New York State**

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Economic Analysis, there were more than 116,000 federal civilian employees working in New York in 2024, earning \$11.2 billion in wages. Employment has decreased significantly since 2000, when there were more than 147,000 federal government employees working in New York, and is likely to decrease in 2025 as a result of federal actions to downsize the federal workforce.

## **Federal Employees in New York Compared to Other States**

New York ranked seventh in 2024 for the highest number of federal government civilian employees and their total annual wages compared to other states and the District of Columbia (D.C.). The top five for both

measures were California, Texas, Virginia and Maryland along with D.C. For annual wages per employee, New York ranked 21st. These outcomes are based on the location of employment, not the residence of the worker.

### **Federal Employees Working in New York State by County**

Most federal government employees work in downstate regions and in counties where New York's major upstate cities are located. In 2024, 40 percent, or almost 46,000, worked in New York City and over 14 percent, over 16,800, worked on Long Island. There were similar shares in wages for these employees in these areas, nearly \$5.0 billion in New York City in 2024 and over \$1.6 billion in Long Island.

There were over 9,100 federal government workers in Erie County in 2024, which includes the city of Buffalo; these individuals earned \$868 million in total wages. Albany County was the next largest upstate center of federal workers with 5,435 employees who earned \$502 million in 2024.

### **Implications of Federal Actions**

Federal workers perform a range of functions in New York. Apart from work at military installations, individuals fill jobs as air traffic controllers, health care workers and scientific researchers, postal workers, public protection and court system officers, engineers, inspectors and skilled tradespeople. Not including the armed forces, the U.S. Postal Service, legislative and judicial branches and other exceptions, the top five agencies that employ federal civilian workers in New York are the Department of Veterans Affairs, U.S. Army, Department of the Treasury, Social Security Administration and the Department of Defense.<sup>1</sup>

On July 7, 2025, the President extended the hiring freeze of most federal civilian positions through October 15, 2025 that he initiated when he took office.<sup>2</sup> The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has indicated there were 2,289,472 federal civilian employees on March 31, 2025, a decrease of 23,744 from 2,313,216 on September 30, 2024. OPM also projects that

“hundreds of thousands” more workers will leave the federal workforce in October 2025 as the result of the Deferred Resignation Program. There are also “tens of thousands” of employees who received reduction-in-force and termination notices and remain in the federal government due to court action currently being challenged.<sup>3</sup> This may affect the critical functions noted above, among others.

While not all federal workers in New York live in the state, they contribute to its economy. Recent data indicates there were 3,000 fewer federal jobs on a seasonally adjusted basis in New York in July 2025 from January 2025.<sup>4</sup>

## **Center For Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Launches a New Innovation Center Model Pilot Project in Six States That May be the First Step to Making Medicare Advantage the Default for People Turning 65**

**This Article appeared in the New York Times on Thursday August 28, 2025.**

A pilot program in six states will use a tactic employed by private insurers (Medicare Advantage) that has been heavily criticized for delaying and denying medical care.

Private insurers often require a cumbersome review process that frequently results in the denial or delay of essential treatments that are readily covered by traditional Medicare. This practice, known as prior authorization, has drawn [public scrutiny](#), which [intensified](#) after the murder of a UnitedHealthcare executive last December.

Ms. Ayres, a 74-year-old retired accounting professor, said she wanted to avoid the hassle that has been associated with such practices under

Medicare Advantage, which are private plans financed by the U.S. government. Now, she is concerned she will face those denials anyway.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services plans to begin [a pilot program](#) that would involve a similar review process for traditional Medicare, the federal insurance program for people 65 and older as well as for many younger people with disabilities. The pilot would start in six states next year, including Oklahoma, where Ms. Ayres lives.

The federal government plans to hire private companies to use artificial intelligence to determine whether patients would be covered for some procedures, like certain spine surgeries or steroid injections. Similar algorithms used by insurers have been the subject of several [high-profile lawsuits](#), which have asserted that the technology allowed the companies to swiftly deny large batches of claims and cut patients off from care in rehabilitation facilities.

The A.I. companies selected to oversee the program would have a strong financial incentive to deny claims. Medicare plans to pay them a share of the savings generated from rejections.

The government said the A.I. screening tool would focus narrowly on about a dozen procedures, which it has determined to be costly and of little to no benefit to patients.

Abe Sutton, the director of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, said that the government would not review emergency services or hospital stays.

Mr. Sutton said the government experiment would examine practices that were particularly expensive or potentially harmful to patients. “This is what prior authorization should be,” he said.

The government may add or subtract to the list of treatments it has slated for review depending on what treatments it finds are being overused, he said.

But while experts agree that wasteful spending exists, they worry that the pilot program may pave the way for traditional Medicare to adopt some of the most unpopular practices of private insurers.

The program, called the Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction Model, is already drawing opposition from Democratic lawmakers, former Medicare officials, physician groups and others.

Patients are also leery. “I think it’s the back door into privatizing traditional Medicare,” Ms. Ayres said.

People enrolled in traditional Medicare who live in **Arizona, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas and Washington State** will be included in the experiment, which is **expected to start in January and last for six years.**

Dr. Vinay Rathi, an Ohio surgeon and an expert in Medicare payment policy, warned that the experiment could recreate the same hurdles that exist with Medicare Advantage, where people enroll in private plans. “It’s basically the same set of financial incentives that has created issues in Medicare Advantage and drawn so much scrutiny,” he said. “It directly puts them at odds with the clinicians.”

Typically, these A.I. models scan a patient’s records to determine if a requested procedure meets an insurer’s criteria. For instance, before authorizing back surgery, the system might search for proof that a patient first tried physical therapy or received an MRI showing a bulging disc.

Many companies say human employees are involved at the final stages, to review the A.I. evidence and approve the recommendations.

Insurers defend these tactics as being effective in reducing inappropriate care, such as by preventing someone from getting back surgery at tremendous cost instead of another treatment that would work just as well.

Government officials said that any denials would be done by “an appropriately licensed human clinician, not a machine.”

Mr. Sutton also emphasized that the government could penalize companies for inappropriate decisions.

A group of House Democrats, including Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, warned in a [letter to government officials](#) in late July that giving for-profit companies a “veto” over care “opens the door to further erosion of our Medicare system.”

Private plans under Medicare Advantage have become increasingly popular, with a little more than half of older Americans and people with disabilities eligible for the program and some [34 million](#) enrolled. But many, like Ms. Ayres, are willing to forgo some of the additional benefits the private plans offer, like dental checkups and gym memberships, to avoid having to jump through numerous hoops to get care.

“It’s really surprising that we are taking the most unpopular part of Medicare Advantage and applying it to traditional Medicare,” said Neil Patil, a senior fellow at Georgetown and a former senior analyst at Medicare.

The American Medical Association [wrote in a letter](#) that doctors view prior authorization “as one of the most burdensome and disruptive administrative requirements they face in providing quality care to patients.” Most patients who appeal are successful, but a vast majority never appeal.

Democrats and Republicans in Congress have supported legislation that would curb some of the insurers' most troublesome practices. The Biden administration enacted some new rules, and the Trump administration was eager to [take credit](#) for pushing insurers to pledge to a series of reforms just a few days before unveiling this new program.

In announcing the new model, Dr. Mehmet Oz, the administrator of the Medicare agency, said the goal was to root out fraud, waste and abuse.

“It boils down to patient harm,” Mr. Sutton said. The model is expected to save several billions of dollars over the next six years, although it could save more if it were expanded.

There are clear-cut examples where Medicare has wasted billions on questionable medical care. The agency came under [scrutiny](#) earlier this year for spending billions of dollars on expensive “skin substitutes” of dubious value. The pilot program would require patients to seek prior authorization before getting a skin substitute.

But if the algorithm used to authorize those procedures proves to save the government money, Dr. Rathi fears C.M.S. may feel justified in broadening the program to include services that are not such “low-hanging fruit.”

“You’re kind of left to wonder, well, where does this lead next?” he said. “You could be running into a slippery slope.”

How insurers make their decisions remains opaque. A spokesman for Health and Human Services, which oversees the Medicare agency, declined to identify which companies had submitted applications for the contract.

Contractors hired by the government are supposed to watch over payments to ward against inappropriate or wasteful coverage. Those reviews generally happen after someone has received a treatment.

The new model relies on an additional set of private companies for traditional Medicare that have a very clear incentive to deny care.

The companies represent “a whole new bounty hunter,” said David A. Lipschutz, the co-director for the Center for Medicare Advocacy, one of the groups that has urged government officials to abandon the program.

## **A Birthday Gift for Social Security: Action Now Will Protect Benefits for the Next 90 Years**

By Dan Doonen, Chief Operating Officer National Institute on Retirement Security

Happy birthday, Social Security! President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law on August 14, 1935, establishing a program that would grow over 90 years to become the foundation of retirement security in the United States. As we celebrate the remarkable accomplishments of Social Security during this anniversary month, it's also important to keep an eye toward the future.

Social Security currently faces a financing gap. As a result of factors that were anticipated (declining birthrates, longer lives) and unanticipated (the significant growth in high-income earners), Social Security currently pays out more in benefits than it collects in contributions each year. This financing gap also was anticipated, so the Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) trust fund was established to collect surplus revenues in earlier years (following the 1983 reforms) to cover the financing gap when it occurred.

So far the OASI trust fund has enabled Social Security to continue paying full, scheduled benefits for 42 years following those reforms, but the surplus revenues in the trust fund are being depleted.

The [most recent estimates](#) by the Office of the Chief Actuary at the Social Security Administration predict that the trust fund will be completely exhausted in late 2032 - only about seven years from now.



It's important to acknowledge that if this occurs, Social Security will not go bankrupt and will continue to collect contributions and pay benefits.

However, if the trust fund is exhausted without action by Congress, then there would be across-the-board benefit cuts of 19 percent or more to bring benefits in line with ongoing contributions. And those benefit cuts would impact all current and future Social Security beneficiaries.

Social Security has faced similar funding challenges in the past that were addressed. For example, in 1983 Congress amended Social Security to address a financing challenge at that time by setting revenue targets that would be viable for a much longer timeframe than past reforms had been, as well as pushing back the full retirement age for younger workers. That effort will have led to Social Security being reliable for almost fifty years without interruption (from 1983-2032). But addressing future challenges will only get more difficult if we continue kicking the can down the road about the coming financing gap.

As Social Security becomes increasingly important and a [larger portion of their total income](#) for retirees as they age and deplete other sources of retirement income, like their 401(k) savings. While Social Security's importance is undeniable, the benefit levels are somewhat modest for most retirees. The [average monthly benefit](#) payment is \$2,007, which totals about \$24,00 annually.

As we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Social Security Act, these achievements are worth honoring. But this milestone is also a time to look ahead and ensure that a lifetime of work continues to mean a retirement with dignity. Americans want to uphold this promise: polling shows that, across political affiliation, gender, and age, the public overwhelmingly wants Congress to address the Social Security financing gap sooner rather than later -- and they're even willing to

contribute more to prevent benefit cuts. Closing this gap is entirely within reach, but it demands the will and action of Congress. The best birthday gift we could give Social Security would be legislation that secures another 90 years of success.

## **NYSARA Biennial Election Convention to be Held This Thursday September 4**

This Thursday NYSARA will elect its officers for the 2025 - 2027. Nominated, have been the current NYSARA officers, Barry Kaufmann (President), Paul Schuh (Vice President) and Gary Lanahan (Treasurer). The office of Secretary is currently vacant and nominations will be accepted from the floor. To be nominated the person nominated must be in attendance and must be a member of a Statewide payer union. Additionally, there may not be more than one of the officers from the same union. If there is a contested election it will be decided by weighted vote as per the Bylaws.

In addition to the elections our keynote speaker will be Robert Roach, President of the National ARA. Other speakers will be Greg Olsen, Acting Director of the NYS Office for the Aging, Ravi Reddi, Senior Staff for US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Senator Gillibrand via tape and Pat Fahy NYS Senator.

Additionally there will be presentations on "Senior Issues 2025 and Beyond - They Really DID Mean What They Said" and "Difficult Conversations in Difficult Times"

The Convention will be held at the NYSUT Headquarters from 10:30 - 3:00 pm. If you haven't registered registration is \$25.

## **New Report of DOGE Operatives Mishandling Americans' SSA Data Emerges**

In June, Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) operatives uploaded a copy of a Social Security Administration (SSA) database to a cloud server without proper security, exposing Americans' highly sensitive SSA data to potential identity theft and exploitation, [according to a whistleblower complaint](#) filed by SSA Chief Data Officer **Charles Borges**.

The database, often referred to as the "Numident file," houses records that include full names, addresses, dates of birth, and many other private details for everyone who has ever held a Social Security number, living and deceased. The file likely contains hundreds of millions of records, as the agency has issued more than 500 million numbers since 1935.

DOGE leaders worked to copy the information to the server despite multiple warnings that Americans' personal information could be exposed in the process. **Aram Moghaddassi**, a former employee at Elon Musk's X and Neuralink corporations, was one of the DOGE officials who signed off on the effort to transfer data, saying "I have determined the business need is higher than the security risk associated with this implementation and I accept all risks."

The complaint also alleges that DOGE bypassed security protocols when it tried to access SSA data in March, and ignored a [temporary restraining order](#) issued in a lawsuit filed by the Alliance, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO, and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) earlier this year. Judge **Ellen Lipton Hollander** issued the TRO on March 20, but DOGE staffers continued accessing data before being locked out on March 24.

This account corroborates previous testimony from **Tiffany Flick**, a former SSA staffer who filed a declaration in the Alliance's case, [stating that](#) DOGE

operatives displayed a blatant disregard for data security policies and procedure.

"This latest revelation about DOGE's unprecedented access is deeply troubling and outrageous," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "President Trump [just pledged](#) to protect Social Security, but SSA is reeling from staffing cuts and now beneficiaries' personal information is at risk because of DOGE's actions. Older Americans should not have to worry about whether the benefits they have earned will actually be paid and whether their private data is handled with care."

## **Save the Date: Alliance Retirement Security Symposium on November 19**

The Alliance's annual Retirement Security Symposium will be held on Wednesday, November 19, from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time, at the AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, D.C. and also streamed online.

The event will examine the looming retirement security crisis and bring together labor movement leaders, policy experts, and many others. Participants will hear about important labor and retirement security issues, including defined benefit pensions and Social Security.

"This symposium will provide resources and tools for individuals and organizations so they are better prepared to strengthen retirement security for the nation and themselves. This mission has become even more critical as 10,000 Americans turn 65 every day," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "More details will follow as the event approaches."

To indicate your interest in attending the event and/or if you have any questions, please contact Joni Jones at [jjones@retiredamericans.org](mailto:jjones@retiredamericans.org) / 202-637-5377.

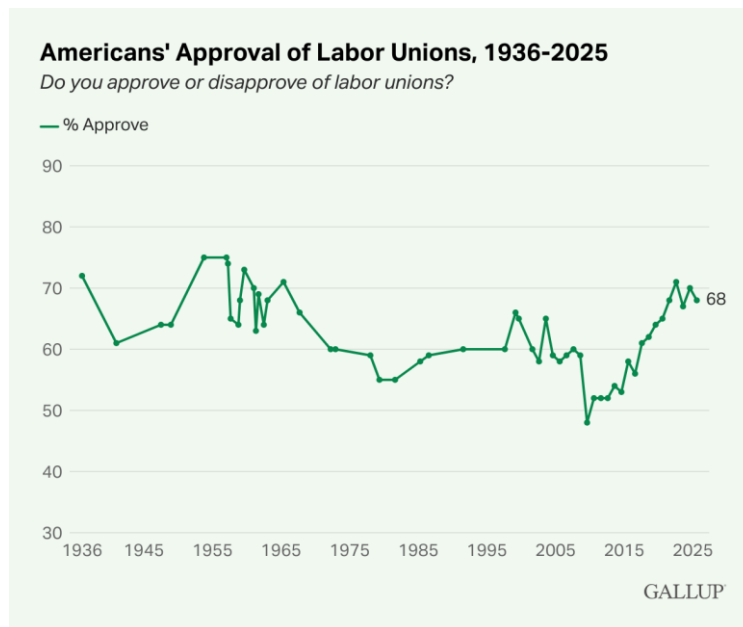
## Labor Day: Union Support Continues to Grow as Workers Face New Threats

[During the State of the Unions address on Wednesday](#), AFL-CIO President **Liz Shuler** highlighted the continued surge in support for labor unions and connected it to the unprecedented threats that workers are currently facing from the Administration. She also drew attention to how workers are struggling to make ends meet amid rising prices and growing income inequality. The address featured a clip of Pennsylvania Alliance leader **Jody Weinreich** speaking about how important it is to protect Social Security for current and future generations of retirees.



[A recent Gallup poll](#) shows that union approval growth has remained steady, staying within the 67 to 71 percent range for the past five years. AFL-CIO data confirms this surge in labor union popularity, showing that

support is particularly high among the most vulnerable workers, with 75 percent of Americans who describe



themselves as “very worried” about their economic future reporting that they view unions favorably.

The AFL-CIO is offering space for workers to mobilize and organize next week by hosting [Workers Labor Day events](#) across the country centered around a common theme: “Workers Deserve: Freedom, Fairness, and Dignity.”

“Next Monday is not just Labor Day, it's the start of Labor Week. Marches, rallies and trainings, hundreds of thousands of working people coming together from this coming weekend to the next, kicking off the single biggest year of action from now until next Labor Day in the history of this movement,” said **Shuler**. “Every single thing working people have won for ourselves in this country, it's not because we asked those in power, it's not because they were handed to us, it's because we fought for them relentlessly by organizing and mobilizing and using our collective power.”

[Click here to find a Labor Day event near you.](#)

## ***KFF Health News: How Older People Are Reaping Brain Benefits From New Tech***

**By Paula Span**

It started with a high school typing course.

Wanda Woods enrolled because her father advised that typing proficiency would lead to jobs. Sure enough, the federal Environmental Protection Agency hired her as an after-school worker while she was still a junior.

Her supervisor “sat me down and put me on a machine called a word processor,” Woods, now 67, recalled. “It was big and bulky and used magnetic cards to store information. I thought, ‘I kinda like this.’” Decades later, she was still liking it. In 2012 — the first year that more than half of Americans 65 and older were internet users — she started a computer training business.

Now she is an instructor with Senior Planet in Denver, an AARP-supported effort to help older people learn and stay abreast of technology. Woods has no plans to retire. Staying involved with tech “keeps me in the know, too,” she said.

Some neuroscientists researching the effects of technology on older adults are inclined to agree. The first cohort of seniors to have contended — not always enthusiastically — with a digital society has reached the age when cognitive impairment becomes more common.

Given decades of alarms about technology’s threats to our brains and well-being — sometimes called “digital dementia” — one might expect to start seeing negative effects.

The opposite appears true. “Among the digital pioneer generation, use of everyday digital technology has been associated with reduced risk of

cognitive impairment and dementia,” said Michael Scullin, a cognitive neuroscientist at Baylor University.