

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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\$250 Payment to Social Security Recipients Voted Down By Senate

Sen. **Bernie Sanders** (I-VT) lost a bid on Wednesday to boost the income of millions of Social Security recipients and offset the elimination of the Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for 2010. His amendment calling for \$13 billion to fund a one-time, \$250 payment to seniors, veterans, and the disabled needed 60 votes to pass, but failed 47-50. For a tally of the vote, go to <http://bit.ly/bTH5iG>. The amendment was to be attached to legislation that would extend jobless benefits and COBRA health care subsidies. There will be no COLA this year due to low inflation. **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance, said, “The purchasing needs of seniors are unique, and often include medications needed to stay alive. We insist that the Senate realize the importance of this \$250 payment to struggling retirees.” Sen. Sanders also said that the fight for the measure, which President Obama included in his budget, would continue.

Obama Calls for Reconciliation in Order to Pass Health Care Reform Quickly

In a health care speech by **Barack Obama** on Wednesday, the President called for an “up or down vote” that would leave Republicans unable to kill the bill through a filibuster. The current Democratic plan is to have the House vote to approve the already-passed Senate bill, plus fixes, then have the Senate pass these fixes through reconciliation. Under this scenario, only a simple majority in the Senate, rather than a super-majority of 60 votes, would be needed to pass health reform. The President stated that he wants action within a few weeks, echoing House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi’s** (D-CA) call for an informal deadline of March 18. Despite Republican criticism that a decision to bar the filibuster would be “met with outrage” by the public, Democrats shot back with claims that the same rules had been used five times during **George W. Bush’s** administration. The Obama White House is still working to include bipartisan measures, and announced that they were exploring GOP proposals that include additional crackdowns on fraudulent medical charges and new rules for medical malpractice suits. “We can’t just quit,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to fix a health care system that is not benefiting millions of Americans, including many seniors.”

Alan Simpson Strikes at Seniors, Social Security, and Medicare

Former U.S. Sen. **Alan Simpson** sat down with the CNBC television network last week to discuss his post as co-chair of the President’s Fiscal Commission on the national debt. Throughout the conversation, he leveled several attacks against seniors and senior advocacy organizations, accusing them of not caring “a whit about their grandchildren...not a whit.” When asked about cuts he would recommend to the President and Congress, he replied, “We are going to stick to the big three,” meaning, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. To see the interview, click on <http://bit.ly/9Hwg6U>. “Alan Simpson’s prior record in the Senate has proven his determination to cut Medicare and Social Security. His appointment has caused widespread alarm among seniors,

veterans, and disabled Americans, who increasingly rely on these programs during the economic downturn,” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance.

Affordable Insurance to Supplement Medicare Available for Alliance Members

Affordable insurance to supplement Medicare is available to Alliance members through the ARA Retiree Health Plan. The Open Enrollment period is underway through March 30, 2010! During this period, Medicare-eligible retirees and their spouses are guaranteed acceptance with no waiting periods, regardless of pre-existing health conditions. Visit www.araretireehealth.com for further details, or call 1-866-298-9117 to receive your Free Information Kit. No agent will call you - everything is handled through the mail.

Social Security Expands Range of Conditions Covered for the Disabled

The Social Security Administration recently added 38 new conditions to its list of “Compassionate Allowances,” diseases and other medical conditions that clearly qualify for expedited Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability benefits. The new allowances include adult brain disorders, including Early-Onset Alzheimer’s Disease. Go to <http://bit.ly/9vjqTx> for a full listing. The upside of the additions is that tens of thousands of Americans with serious disabilities will get approved for Social Security benefits in a more timely fashion - it could take just days instead of months or years - and benefits will reach many more Americans with severe conditions.

Organize Online!

You may be an Alliance member, but are you a member of the Alliance GROUP on Facebook? By joining the Alliance GROUP online, you have access to conversations and interactions with other Alliance members in your state and around the country. Find out what other Alliance members are doing to make a difference in their communities. Click on <http://bit.ly/9O5E3Z> to join (You must sign in as a Facebook member). Many seniors find this a useful way to stay in touch, be involved, and to organize at the grassroots level. If you are new to Facebook, you can find helpful materials on getting started, including online security tips, at <http://bit.ly/9IcwM>.

In Kansas City, Barbara Easterling Touts Credit Unions

Today, Ms. Easterling attends a United Labor Credit Union seminar on retirement security in Kansas City, MO, where guests are gathering to discuss plans for their families’ financial futures. Easterling points out that credit unions are a great alternative to for-profit financial institutions, many of which are growing notorious for greed, mismanagement, and anti-consumer practices.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to Speak at Alliance’s Las Vegas Convention

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) will address attendees at the Alliance’s National Convention in Las Vegas, April 5-8, 2010. The conference, themed *Building Retiree Power*, offers educational and training opportunities to improve activism techniques and leadership skills for the 2010 elections. **For discount hotel rates, book on Bally’s Las Vegas website <http://bit.ly/btQ57d>. Reservations can also be made with Bally's directly at 1-800-358-8777 – tell them you are with the Alliance and book by MARCH 9th for reduced rate.** To register for the convention itself, please go to <http://bit.ly/1jIzz2> or call (202) 637-5377.

This message is being sent to you as a member of the Alliance for Retired Americans. The Alliance is a nationwide membership organization organized under Internal Revenue Code 501 (c) (4) and dedicated to educating all Americans about and advocating on behalf of retirees and seniors. The Alliance is responsible for the content and has paid all costs associated with the preparation and distribution of this message.