

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006

202.637.5399 • [www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org) • [arafridayalert@retiredamericans.org](mailto:arafridayalert@retiredamericans.org)

March 12, 2010

## **In Week of Health Care Developments, Thousands Gather to Rally Against Insurers**

Tens of thousands of activists, seniors, union members, and religious leaders protested against insurance company abuses on Tuesday in front of the Ritz-Carlton in Washington, D.C., where America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) leaders were meeting. The enthusiastic crowd chanted and brandished their signs, demanding that Congress finish their health care reform fight. Several Alliance groups were among the protestors who turned out in full force. The same day, Alliance members participated in a conference call on health care with White House Senior Advisor **David Axelrod**. On Wednesday, President **Barack Obama** delivered a passionate, campaign-style health care stump speech in St. Charles, Missouri, just outside of St. Louis. Ten Alliance members attended that event. The next day, the Congressional Budget Office announced that the Senate health care plan would cut the deficit by \$118 billion over a decade. Also on Thursday, Senate Majority Leader **Harry Reid** (D-NV) outlined in a letter to Sen. **Mitch McConnell** (R-KY) his plans to use reconciliation to make budget-related changes to the health reform legislation passed by the Senate in December. The procedure will allow the changes to pass with a simple majority in the Senate, rather than a super-majority of 60 votes. Reid noted in the letter that the bill reduces health care costs and fills the prescription drug "donut hole" for seniors while reducing the deficit. "We urge Congress to take the next step and pass this legislation, for the benefit of all Americans, especially seniors, who are feeling the brunt of health insurance abuses," said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance.

## **Alliance Works with National Center on Senior Transportation**

The National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST) held their annual educational briefing on Capitol Hill on March 2, calling attention to the "silent need" for senior transportation in both rural and urban neighborhoods. NCST's priority is to ensure that older Americans have options in order to maintain mobility and their independence. Throughout the past year, they have partnered with numerous transportation groups to provide free or affordable travel options for seniors and the disabled. Among the topics discussed at the briefing were pedestrian-friendly senior communities and door-to-door pick-ups and drop-offs. "The Alliance is excited to work with the NCST on this issue," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Nothing is more essential than helping seniors to maintain their independence and improve their quality of life." To find or organize a transportation program in your area, go to <http://bit.ly/aHKRZk>.

## **CVS Exec Kills Drug Labeling Reform in California**

Last month, the California pharmacy board was poised to adopt strict new requirements for prescription drug labels, such as large type on labels and an oral translation available for non-English speakers. Senior citizens, consumer advocacy groups, and minority organizations had championed these proposals, calling them essential. However, the day before the vote, Gov.

**Arnold Schwarzenegger** (R) placed a CVS/Pharmacy executive on the board. The executive, **Deborah Veale**, then cast a vote that effectively killed that plan. Under the new regulations that did pass, pharmacies are not obligated to provide non-English translations of drug labels, and the small print on labels will remain. **Nan Brasmer**, President of the California Alliance, criticized the decision, stating plainly, "We can't clearly read little tiny type." The regulations contradict recommendations by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, but Schwarzenegger's spokesman said only that the governor was not trying to influence the vote and does not have an official position on labeling requirements.

### **Community-Based Scholarships Announced!**

In order to ensure attendance of the nation's most dedicated and accomplished community-based seniors, the Alliance granted 10 scholarships to 12 individuals nationally to defray the costs of this year's Las Vegas convention. One of the scholarships was shared three ways. The winners include: **Dawn Bronsema** (CA), **Samuel Burnett** (OH), **Sadie Coleman** (MD), **James Collins** (NY), **Suleika Cabrera Drinane** (NY), **Artist Gilbert** (CA), **Kathleen Kennedy** (AZ), **Diana Carpenter Madoshi** (CA), **Larry Malone** (MO), **Lithangia Robinson Murray** (GA), **Will Parry** (WA) and **Gerald Rennert** (FL). Mr. Burnett said, "The number of seniors is growing and so is the need for them to get reliable information about the issues that matter to them. The Alliance provides a way for seniors to receive this information and to act accordingly. I look forward to taking skills from the convention back to my state."

### **Suggested Resolutions for Convention are Due by Monday**

The Alliance's April 5-8 Las Vegas convention will offer educational and training opportunities to improve both grassroots activism techniques and leadership skills. Confirmed speakers include Sen. **Reid** and Rep. **Shelley Berkley** (D-NV); the Alliance wishes Sen. Reid's wife and daughter a speedy recovery from injuries sustained in a serious car crash on Thursday. As part of the convention, any delegate registered to attend may offer or second a resolution for consideration. The resolution must pertain to a statement of the Alliance's position or policy on a specific matter. Please send your suggestions to [2010Resolutions@retiredamericans.org](mailto:2010Resolutions@retiredamericans.org) to be considered. Proposed resolutions, and seconds, must be received by the Alliance no later than March 15, 2010 in order for the Resolutions Committee, designated by the Alliance President, to review them. To register for the convention, please go to <http://bit.ly/1jIzz2>.

### **Phil Feaster: A Lifetime of Service**

**Phil Feaster**, former board member of the Teamster National Black Caucus and active member of the Maryland Alliance, died on Sunday, March 7. He was 70 years old. Feaster was elected President of Local 639, a position that he held for 17 years. A recipient of the Humanitarian of the Year Award in 1995, he devoted his life to the labor movement and improving the lives of working families. He served as a Maryland delegate for the 2000 Democratic National Convention, and remained active in retirement, speaking at a U.S House press conference with Speaker **Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA) in July about the "donut hole." A video that includes Mr. Feaster is on the Alliance's home web page at [www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org). He will be greatly missed.