

# FRIDAY ALERT



## Alliance for Retired Americans

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## Americans Keep their Health Care as Repeal Bill Fails in Senate

In a major victory for older Americans concerned about health care costs, the Senate [failed](#) to pass a partial repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) early Friday morning. Republican Senators **Susan Collins** (ME), **Lisa Murkowski** (AK), and **John McCain** (AZ) joined all Democratic senators in voting against the legislation, defeating the bill [51-49](#).

The partial repeal of the ACA, dubbed the “skinny repeal,” was a last resort for Senate Republicans, who narrowly approved the motion to begin debate on health care Tuesday. The bill would have destabilized the insurance market by repealing the individual and employer mandate for health insurance. Expanded waivers would have allowed states not to cover some essential health benefits currently covered by the ACA. The Congressional Budget Office found that the skinny repeal would have left 16 million more uninsured and caused premiums to increase 20%.

“We applaud all those who voted against such a harmful and deadly initiative,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “We are now calling on all elected leaders to come together and commit to a thoughtful, bipartisan deliberation on a bill that will improve health care and make it more affordable for all Americans.”

Earlier in the week the Senate rejected a version of the health care bill, [43-57](#) (60 votes needed for passage) that included the controversial “Cruz Amendment” from Sen. **Ted Cruz** (R-TX). This would have allowed those with pre-existing conditions to be separated into plans with much higher premiums. On Wednesday, the Senate rejected another version of the bill [45-55](#). That version would have repealed the ACA with no replacement but with a two-year delay, giving GOP senators more time to create a replacement system.

Many Republican senators said they were opposed to the skinny repeal, but wanted to use it as a way to get to negotiations with House Republicans on a final health care bill.

“Thank you very much to everyone who called their senators or governors, signed a petition, attended a rally or protest, wrote a letter to the editor or spoke out against attempts to unravel our health care system,” President Roach continued. “You helped make this victory possible. But we must remain vigilant and protect our health care.”

## Alliance Members and Allies Celebrate the Anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid

July 30 marks the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the creation of Medicare and Medicaid, and activists around the country are taking the opportunity to call on their elected officials to protect and strengthen both health care programs for the future. Ever since President **Lyndon B. Johnson** signed the programs into law in 1965, millions of Americans have relied on Medicare and Medicaid for access to guaranteed, affordable and quality health care and long-term care.

On Thursday, Alliance members attended a press conference on Capitol Hill. **Marguerite O'Connor**, an Alliance member and American Federation of Teachers retiree, spoke of the importance of Medicare in keeping her healthy and in her home throughout retirement. She was joined by members of Congress including Reps. **Nancy Pelosi** (CA), House Democratic Leader; **Joe Crowley** (NY), Democratic Caucus Chair; and **Jan Schakowsky** (IL) and **Doris Matsui** (CA), Seniors Task Force Co-Chairs, as well as **Suzanne Bonamici** (OR), **Charlie Crist** (FL), **Lois Frankel** (FL), **Michelle Lujan Grisham** (NM), **Al Lawson** (FL), and **Sheila Jackson Lee** (TX) in expressing the need to protect Medicare and Medicaid from cuts in the Senate's health care bill and the most recent House budget bill.



Alliance members and staff at the Capitol Hill birthday party for Medicare and Medicaid with Members of Congress on Thursday. (Photo credit: Jody Weinreich)

Earlier in the week, members of the Florida Alliance (FLARA) met in Tampa with Representative **Kathy Castor** (D-FL) on Monday to celebrate Medicare at the Congresswoman's district office. The group of 25 included retired members of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), and National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE). FLARA members also visited other congressional offices this week.

In addition, Alliance members were at Representative **Ruben Gallego's** (D-AZ) office in Phoenix, Arizona, and Representative **Tom McClintock's** (R-CA) office in Roseville, California. Retirees also held an informational event in Toledo, Ohio. Dozens of similar Medicare birthdays will be held across the country in the coming weeks, including 16 events this Monday in Florida.

## **Events at U.S. Capitol, Efforts across the Country Help Sink Repeal of ACA**

Alliance members and allies protested all week in the nation's capital and across the country as Senate Republicans debated stripping away health coverage from between 16 and 32 million Americans. On Monday, Alliance members attended a "die-in" hosted by MoveOn.org in front of the U.S. Capitol to protest the Senate's efforts to weaken health care. At the event, Maryland/DC Alliance member **Susan Flashman**, who needed brain surgery to remove a brain tumor when she was 57, spoke of the importance of affordable health insurance and criticized the GOP's plans to allow insurers to discriminate against those with pre-existing conditions.

On Thursday night, with the Senate poised to hold a final vote on the repeal, protesters went again to the Capitol and demanded that the Senate reject it.

Over the last month, thousands more Alliance members phoned their Senators urging them to vote no on the repeal plans and reached out to their governors, urging them to speak out against the bills.

"Activism works," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Senate Republicans held the repeal process in the dark, but these events reminded everyone that we see through their schemes and will hold them accountable for any action that weakens health care."

## **Record Number of Seniors Remain in Work Force**

A recent analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows that the number of older Americans in the workforce has reached an [all-time high](#). Economist **Nick Buffie** of the Center for Economic and Policy Research found that nearly a third of Americans aged 65-69 and nearly half of Americans aged 62-64 are employed.

Employment has risen even among the oldest Americans – those ages 75 and over. In 1985, just 3.8% in this age range were working. But over the past 31 years, the share of Americans aged 75 and over holding a job has more than doubled, rising to 8.1% by 2016.

Mr. Buffie says that it is highly likely that seniors are continuing to work to make ends meet because the benefits they would receive from Social Security have not kept pace with their actual cost of living and rising medical costs.

"After a lifetime of hard work, seniors should have the ability to retire without sacrificing their standard of living," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "We will keep fighting for proposals to expand Social Security and increase earned benefits so that people are not forced to keep working into old age to pay basic living expenses."