

FRIDAY ALERT



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Congress Passes Republican Tax Bill, Sends it to President Trump for Signature

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, or [H.R. 1](#), passed the U.S. Senate by a slim margin of [51-48](#) on Wednesday. The bill was also approved by the U.S. House on Wednesday, [224-201](#).



President Trump discusses the freshly passed tax bill at White House event.

Over the next 10 years, at least \$1.5 trillion will be added to the federal deficit laying the groundwork for an effort to enact massive cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

“The Republican Congress has willfully exploded the deficit to create the conditions to cut the Social Security and Medicare benefits we have earned over a lifetime of hard work.” said **Richard Fiesta**, Alliance executive director, in a [statement](#). “The 4.4 million members of the Alliance for Retired Americans are committed to holding the House members who voted for this accountable next November. We will not rest in exposing this scam tax bill.”

Help Us Defend Medicare and Social Security in 2018

Now that Republicans [have passed](#) their tax bill, their next goal is to work on so-called “entitlement” reform next year. U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan first [made this intention clear](#) when he told a radio talk host that he plans to tackle the deficit by slashing “entitlements.” As we know, that is code for Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security.

Several lawmakers, including Sens. **John Thune** (R-SD), **Roy Blunt** (R-MO.), **Bob Corker** (R-TN), **Ron Johnson** (R-WI), and **Lamar Alexander** (R-TN), **Jeff Flake** (R-AZ), and House Ways and Means Committee Chair **Kevin Brady** (R-TX), followed up Ryan’s statements [with indications](#) that they would support such a step.

While the details aren't known, we expect to be fighting against Medicare privatizations and vouchers, as well as efforts to raise the full retirement age.

Please [sign up](#) to be a part of our response team. We will send regular updates and ways you can get involved in the fight to save Medicare and Social Security.

Big Pharma Lined Influencers' Pockets To Stop Drug Pricing Debate

Last year, the top pharmaceutical trade association enjoyed its biggest revenue increase since 2009 -- and gave much of the cash to legislators and lobbyists in order to quell drug pricing talks, according to [an analysis](#) from *Kaiser Health News*.

In addition to giving the money directly politicians, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) also invested in groups like American Action Network, ballot measure campaigns, and the "Go Boldly" advertising campaign. Patient groups, including the American Autoimmune Related Disease Association, the American Lung Association, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, and the Lupus Foundation of America, also got an influx of cash. Contributions were not along partisan lines, as both the Republican Governors Association and the Democratic Governors Association received upwards of \$300,000.

PhRMA's political strategy seems to be working, as efforts to control prices have not gained traction in Congress or the Trump Administration. At the same time, pharmaceutical corporations continue to make record profits and prices increase. Strongbridge Pharmaceuticals, which reported \$2.5 million in sales last year, [has increased](#) the cost for a rare paralysis disease treatment from \$50 per 100 pills to \$109,500.

"The pharmaceutical industry's makes obscene amounts of money from drug price hikes and then spends those profits to protect the status quo," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, Alliance president. "We must be ever more determined and organized to fight back on behalf of retirees and all consumers."

Almost a Quarter of Elderly Patients Report Health Care Discrimination

According to a [new study](#) published in the International Journal of Medicine, 20 percent of older patients reported experiencing health care discrimination between 2008 and 2014. The study surveyed white, black, and Hispanic patients aged 54 years or older, and tracked the main reasons for discrimination: age, race or ancestry, weight or physical appearance, and financial status. All patients had at least one chronic condition.

Twenty-nine percent of white patients reported age as being the main reason for the health discrimination they faced, as did 29 percent of black patients and 27 percent of Hispanic patients. The results [cement](#) what geriatric specialists have reported anecdotally -- that many physicians tend to chalk up certain conditions like loss of bladder control or memory impairment as "part of getting old."

But this can cause valid health concerns to be dismissed, and leads patients to think that stereotypical maladies are an inevitable part of aging when they are not. This is compounded by the fact that there is a shortage of physicians specializing in geriatrics. If an older patient wants to ensure quality care from someone who will view aging in a more positive light, physicians suggest that they consult a geriatric specialist.

"Such statistics and anecdotes are eye-opening for anyone who works to improve healthcare quality for older Americans," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Alliance secretary-treasurer. "It's clear that we need to do better in making our seniors feel secure with the care they are getting."

Happy Holidays!

The Alliance will be closed for the holidays from December 23, 2017 - January 2, 2018. For news updates during that time and all year long, please like our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/retiredamericans

We wish you and your family a safe and enjoyable holiday season!

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of over 4.4 million retirees and their families.