



# 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)

Spanish version: [www.alianzadejubilados.org](http://www.alianzadejubilados.org)

**March 27, 2020**

---

## Congress Passes Coronavirus Stimulus Package

On Friday Congress approved a \$2 trillion relief package to address some of the financial impact of the coronavirus outbreak. The goal of the legislation is to provide money to families and increased unemployment insurance benefits for the millions who have lost jobs this month. The bill also provides funds to states, hospitals and nursing homes to respond and fight the spread of pandemic.

The CARES Act provides \$500 billion for direct payments to individuals. The Treasury Department has said that people can expect to receive the payments in 3-5 weeks.

According to the House Ways and Means Committee, [everyone in the United States is eligible for the full rebates](#) (\$1,200 per adult, \$500 per minor child) as long as they have a Social Security number and don't exceed the household income thresholds (\$75,000 if single/\$150,000 for a married couple). There's no exclusion based on type of income, whether it's [Social Security](#) or government pensions or other benefits. Eligibility is exactly the same for those who have in the past been affected by the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset.

All of the payments will come from the IRS, but the IRS will be able to use information from the Social Security Administration (SSA) regarding Social Security beneficiaries. State and local retirees who do not receive any Social Security benefits will be eligible for rebates, just like everybody else. The IRS will use their most recently-filed tax return to identify these individuals.

**To find out what you are likely to receive, go to [The Washington Post's calculator](#).**

"The stimulus will give some relief to people who are suffering," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "However, it is not perfect and does not include the meaningful protection for pensions that retirees and workers need. The President must sign it into law while we continue to fight and make sure that any future stimulus packages address the multiemployer pension crisis."

## Texas Lieutenant Governor Suggests Sacrificing Seniors to Benefit the Economy!

Texas Lieutenant Governor **Dan Patrick** provoked outrage for suggesting that he and other grandparents, who are at higher risk of illness and death from COVID-19, would be willing to risk their health and their lives to save the American economy. [Speaking with Tucker Carlson on Fox News](#), Lt. Gov. Patrick stated that he fears stay-at-home orders will permanently hurt the economy and the American way of life.

“The Lt. Governor’s comments were outrageous. Older Americans are a critical part of the fabric of our country and our economy,” said Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta**.



“Seniors own businesses, work in our grocery stores, teach children, [provide unpaid child care for their grandchildren](#), and care for older citizens and people with disabilities. [53% of all U.S. consumer spending is done by people over the age of 50](#). We will need every American, including our oldest citizens, to recover from this serious public health crisis.”

## Wisconsin Alliance Sues State of Wisconsin Over Absentee Ballot Law

On Thursday, the Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans, the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, the Fair Elections Center and four registered Wisconsin voters [filed a lawsuit](#) in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin seeking to protect the rights of self-quarantining voters who cannot obtain a witness signature on their mail-in ballot during the COVID-19 pandemic. The case is Gear v. Knudson. The named plaintiff is Alliance member **Sylvia Gear**, who is personally burdened by the requirements of the law.

The lawsuit alleges that due to the severe health threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, many Wisconsin voters will be forced to vote by mail-in absentee ballot and, because the state requires each voter to secure a witness signature, it will prevent certain eligible voters who live alone or without an adult U.S. citizen in the household from casting a vote.

The plaintiffs allege that this constitutes an undue burden on the right to vote not justified by any legitimate or important government interest in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. They are asking the Court to issue an order that would prevent the State of Wisconsin from rejecting and/or refusing to process and count absentee mail-in ballots that lack a witness signature during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The right to vote is sacred. Older Americans take this civic responsibility very seriously,” said **Marlene Ott**, president of Wisconsin Alliance and one of the plaintiffs. “There are more than 890,000 seniors registered to vote in Wisconsin. This law puts all of us in an impossible position. Either we put our health at risk by violating the public health directive to self-isolate, or we give up our right to vote. We are calling on the courts to act and ensure that older people in Wisconsin are not needlessly disenfranchised.”



State President Ott at a 2019 event

The complaint can be found [here](#).

## Coronavirus Puts Price-Gouging by Pharma Back at Center Stage

Defeating the coronavirus pandemic will require citizens, the government and businesses to work together toward a common purpose. In the case of vaccines for coronavirus, [nearly every one in development involves public-private partnerships](#) which build on taxpayer-funded research. Yet in many cases, once the research is completed and a vaccine or drug is approved, the drug corporations receive astronomical profits with no strings attached.

This week Gilead Corporation caved to public pressure and withdrew an outrageous application to the FDA to grant its experimental coronavirus drug a 7-year monopoly once approved.

“We can’t rely on public outrage to get these corporations to do the right thing,” said **President Roach**. “Congress must take meaningful action to stop anti-competitive pharmaceutical corporations from price-gouging and profiteering at any time, but especially during a global crisis.”

You can take action by [telling Congress: No Coronavirus monopolies for drug corporations](#).

## Affordable Care Act Turned 10 This Week

[Ten years ago Monday, President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act](#) (ACA) into law allowing millions of Americans to gain health insurance. Over the years the landmark health law has also survived two Supreme Court cases, over 60 repeal votes by Republican-controlled Congresses, and President Trump’s campaign promise to repeal it.

“In the midst of this coronavirus pandemic and an [upcoming Supreme Court case](#) that will test the ACA again, the changes it brought have never been more important,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Alliance Secretary-Treasurer. “Senate Majority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (KY) even continued to attack the ACA during the current health crisis. The Senate proposal undermined employer coverage by adding [new exceptions to the ACA’s employer mandate](#).”



The ACA has drastically expanded insurance coverage for Americans - 20 million more people have coverage now than before the law. The ACA has helped reduce disparities by improving coverage access for people of color and low-income people. The law protects patients with preexisting conditions, many of whom are older Americans, and it also offers preventative care to millions who might have become ill.

Because of the pandemic 11 states and the District of Columbia have [re-opened ACA enrollment periods](#) to allow laid-off workers to sign up for insurance.