



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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October 16, 2020

Social Security Administration Announces Meager 1.3% COLA Increase for 2021

The Social Security Administration announced on Tuesday that its annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will be 1.3 percent in 2021, which means an average \$20 boost in retirement benefits per month. This year's COLA is the smallest since 2017 and slightly under the 1.4% average over the past decade.

"The members of the Alliance are disappointed and angry that Social Security beneficiaries will receive a paltry 1.3% benefit increase," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance in a statement. "While any COLA is better than nothing, 1.3% is not nearly enough to keep up with the escalating cost of prescription drugs and other expenses seniors have to spend their money on."

He noted that at least 16% of seniors who work have lost their job due to the coronavirus pandemic, making Social Security a larger portion of their income.

"To help seniors and strengthen Social Security, we need to protect and expand the program. We can modestly increase benefits by making the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share by removing the artificial earnings cap," Fiesta added.

In response to the small COLA and to account for the financial problems caused by the pandemic, House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee Chairman **John Larson** (CT) and Rep. **Peter DeFazio** (OR) have proposed [emergency legislation](#) to raise the COLA to 3% next year.

Alliance Lawsuits in North Carolina and Wisconsin Continue to Make Their Way Through the Courts

There were significant developments in several of the voting rights lawsuits filed by state Alliances this week to ensure that older voters can cast a vote that will be counted during the pandemic.

- In North Carolina, a federal district judge [upheld key provisions of the agreement](#) the North Carolina Alliance reached with the state earlier this year.

- The [Wisconsin Alliance](#)'s case to restore the back-up option for voters who do not receive their absentee ballots in the mail is pending before the U.S. Supreme Court.



“The Alliance is proud of its work to make voting easier, especially during the pandemic,” said Executive Director Fiesta. “There are record requests for mail-ballots and people coming out for in-person early voting. Older voters need to be able to participate fully in this election with the least risk possible to their health and safety.”

Biden and Trump Step Up Their Fight for Older Voters

Democratic presidential nominee **Joe Biden** argued this week that **President Trump** has [turned his back on older Americans](#), citing the president’s widely criticized response to the coronavirus, his attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and his approach to Social Security and Medicare. According to a recent *NBC/Wall Street Journal* poll, **Biden is leading Trump with older voters by a whopping 27 points.**

Referring to Trump’s pandemic response, Biden gave a [speech](#) at a community center for seniors in Pembroke Pines, Florida on Tuesday and said in Trump’s mind, seniors are “expendable.”

“Donald Trump is simple — not a joke — you’re expendable,” he said. “You’re forgettable. You’re virtually nobody. That’s how he sees seniors,” Biden said. “The only senior that Donald Trump cares about — the only senior — is the senior Donald Trump,” he later added.

Amy Coney Barrett Hearings: Maybe Medicare is Unconstitutional??

The Senate Judiciary Committee held its confirmation hearings this week for **Amy Coney Barrett**, Trump’s nominee to fill **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**’s Supreme Court seat. During the hearings Sen. **Dianne Feinstein** (CA) [asked Barrett](#) if she agreed with “some originalists who say the Medicare program is unconstitutional.” Barrett declined to answer the question.



“It is outrageous that President Trump would consider a Supreme Court nominee who cannot say that Medicare is constitutional,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “The health of every senior is at risk with this nomination,” he continued.

Judge Barrett

Barrett could potentially be confirmed by the Senate and join the Court before Election Day, which means that she could rule on the upcoming *Texas v. United States* case about the future of the ACA. Many legal analysts think Barrett, if confirmed, could be the deciding vote to strike down the law.

Nursing Homes Continue to be Plagued by Covid-19

An [AARP analysis](#) of recent government data shows that 50% of U.S. nursing homes have staff infected with Covid-19. The virus has claimed over 215,000 lives, 40% of which have occurred in nursing homes. The analysis also found that [a quarter of facilities](#) are short on workers as well as personal protective equipment (PPE).

Some states are doing far worse than others. For example, in Maine, New Mexico and New Hampshire, at least half of nursing homes reported insufficient PPE. In South Dakota and Kansas, more than half of nursing homes reported a staff shortage.

“Seniors need strong national leadership to bring us out of the coronavirus crisis,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “We have had more than enough time to address the PPE shortages in nursing homes that are a major factor in spreading the virus.”

The Hottest Trend in 2020: Voting Early

More than 17,800,000 Americans have cast their ballots either through the mail or in person, according to the [U.S. Election Project](#), which tracks early voting statistics in real time. That number is almost 13 percent of the total number of Americans who voted in the 2016 presidential election.

States [that kicked off early in-person voting this week](#) were:

- Oct. 12 - Georgia
- Oct. 13 - Kentucky & Texas
- Oct. 14 - Kansas, Rhode Island & Tennessee
- Oct. 15 - North Carolina
- Oct. 16 - Washington, Louisiana

“Voting early is an opportunity to lock in your vote and then not have to worry about it,” said **President Roach**. “Go to [vote.org](#) if you have any questions about the deadlines or rules where you live.”