



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Sen. Romney Continues to Threaten Retirement Security

During the COVID-19 relief debate last week, the Senate voted [71-29](#) in favor of an amendment by Sen. **Mitt Romney** (UT) that paves the way for Social Security and Medicare “Rescue Committees.” These committees would have the authority to recommend drastic changes to the Social Security, Medicare and Highway Trust Funds without limits to what they can propose -- putting benefit cuts for current and future retirees on the table.



Sen. Romney

The amendment is based on a bill Sen. Romney introduced with Rep. **Mike Gallagher** (WI) during the last Congress, the “[Time to Rescue the United States Trusts \(TRUST\) Act](#),” S. 2733 and H.R. 4907. Although this amendment cannot be included in the COVID Relief bill on parliamentary grounds, the vote of support for ideas in the TRUST Act is a threat to the retirement security of millions of Americans.

Each “Rescue Committee” will have 12 members, appointed by the House Speaker and Minority Leader and the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders. Their deliberations would not include any public hearings or amendments, and must receive an up or down vote in the Senate. Anything is on the table -- including benefit cuts, changes to the eligibility age, means testing of benefits, or higher taxes on working Americans.

“The Alliance for Retired Americans strongly opposes the TRUST ACT. Retirees have earned their Social Security and Medicare benefits over a lifetime of work and we will fight against any scheme to cut or weaken them,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Every Senator and member of Congress must reject the TRUST Act and any future bills or amendments that aim to make dangerous changes or cuts to these essential programs. We will be speaking to our senators and representatives and watching their votes closely.”

Rescue Plan for Multiemployer Pension Plans Advances in the House

This week the House Ways and Means Committee marked up the “[Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act of 2021](#),” important legislation that addresses the nation’s struggling multiemployer pension plans.

The multiemployer pension plans of more than a million people in industries such as construction, retail, manufacturing, transportation, mining and others are on the brink of insolvency, and the insurance backstop program -- the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) -- is also in danger of insolvency. The plans’ financial problems largely stem from an imbalance between active contributors and those receiving benefits; liability of employee benefits from employers that are no longer participating; and the economic recession of 2008.

“Many workers and pension beneficiaries have foregone pay raises and other workplace benefits in favor of a defined benefit pension, and they did not create the financial problems these plans face,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “If the plans become insolvent, it will lead to benefit cuts of 50% to 75%. A collapse of the PBGC will result in a total loss of benefits.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation and made congressional action more urgent. Job losses and the economic slowdown have caused a reduction in employer contributions to the pension plans and affected even previously healthy multiemployer plans.

The provisions in the Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Relief Act will shore up plans that are in critical and declining status while also keeping the healthy plans from becoming troubled. In addition, the provisions will help stabilize the multiemployer trust fund of the PBGC. Failure to act will lead to the insolvency of the multiemployer trust fund and jeopardize the retirement income of 10.4 million hard-working Americans.

PRO Act is Re-Introduced in House and Senate to Make it Easier to Form a Union

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Chair **Patty Murray** (WA) and House Education and Labor Chair **Bobby Scott** (VA) have reintroduced the [Protecting the Right to Organize Act](#) (PRO Act), H.R. 842 in the House, to give working people a voice on the job, enabling them to negotiate for higher wages, better benefits, a safe workplace and protection against discrimination. Union officials and economic analysts have called it the most-pro-worker labor law legislation in more than 85 years.

“This legislation is a game changer,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Retirees know when workers can join together and negotiate better wages, health care and pension benefits, it helps them now and down the road when they retire.”

The PRO Act, which passed the House with bipartisan support last year, imposes financial penalties on companies and individual corporate officers who violate the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) that was enacted in 1935 to protect the rights of employees, to encourage collective bargaining, and to curtail certain private sector labor and management practices which harm the general welfare of workers.

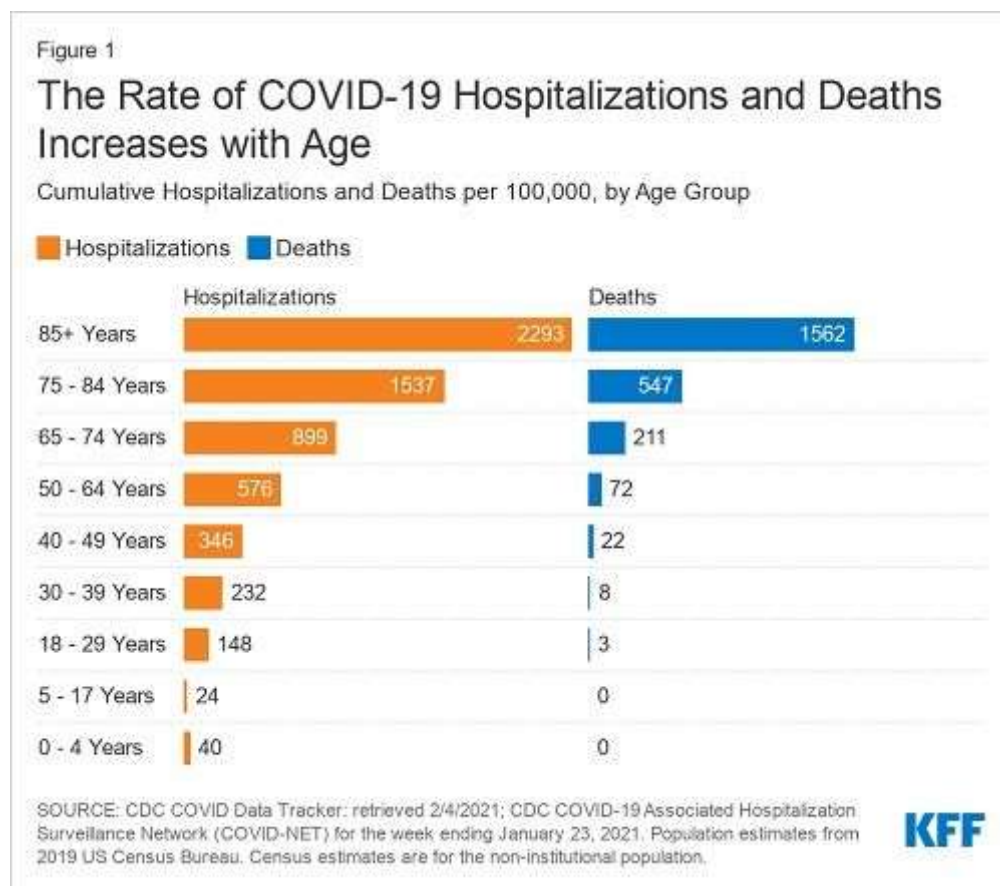
The PRO Act ensures that employees are not deprived of a collective bargaining agreement because they are mis-classified as supervisors or independent contractors. It also gives workers the option of bringing their cases to federal court.

The bill would make union elections fairer by prohibiting employers from requiring their employees to attend "captive audience" meetings, a tactic used by employers to present anti-union propaganda to pressure workers to vote against forming a union.

KHN: At This Early Stage of the COVID-19 Vaccine Roll-Out, Most Older Adults Have Not Yet Been Vaccinated As Supply Remains Limited

By Meredith Freed, Juliette Cubanski, Nancy Ochieng, and Tricia Neuman, *Kaiser Health News*

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, older adults have been at greater risk of serious illness, hospitalization, and death due to COVID-19. In mid-January, the Trump Administration advised states to expand vaccine eligibility to people ages 65 and older, in addition to health care workers, and residents and staff in long-term care facilities – a recommendation that was reinforced by the incoming Biden Administration. As of February 1, 2021, more than half of all states (29 states and the District of Columbia) have expanded eligibility for COVID-19 vaccines to include people 65 and older.



To date, nearly 32 million people, or about 10% of the US population, have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. According to the CDC, adults ages 65 and older, including residents of long-term care facilities who are primarily in this age group, account for 29% of all people who

were administered a COVID-19 vaccine dose in the first month of vaccination, disproportionate to their share of the overall population (15%). Nationwide, more than 54 million people are age 65 or older, in addition to those who are living in long-term care facilities.

This analysis looks at COVID-19 vaccination rates among older adults at the state level, and the share of all vaccines administered that have been given to older adults, among the 28 states and DC that are currently reporting vaccination data by age as of February 4, 2021.

[Click to read more.](#)

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.