



# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## Prices Jump 5% On More Than 450 Prescription Drugs to Start the Year

Pharmaceutical corporations have already raised wholesale prices by a median of 4.9% on more than 450 prescription medicines in 2022, according to a new [analysis](#) by *Stat*.

The industry is expected to hike more prices throughout January. In 2021, the pharmaceutical corporations spread 783 price hikes throughout the first month of the year to avoid the heightened scrutiny of January 1 hikes.

The initial batch of price increases includes a 4.9% increase on [Trikafta](#), a blockbuster cystic fibrosis medication from Vertex that has no competitors and already has a list price of more than \$311,000 per year.

A recent three-year [investigation](#) by the House Oversight and Reform Committee found that drug corporations increase prices in the United States because the government does not regulate or negotiate drug prices. The Committee's report also revealed that price hikes went to executive bonuses and meeting revenue targets, not increased research and development or increasing the effectiveness of existing drugs.

"It is outrageous that legislation to lower drug prices and allow Medicare to negotiate with the drug corporations is stalled in the Senate," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "The industry's monopoly power over prices is unjustified, and the American people are tired of paying the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. Older Americans can't wait any longer."

## How to Get Social Security Questions Answered

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has released a new [flyer](#) explaining how Americans can get help and information while the pandemic continues. It stresses that the best way for most people to find the information they need is on its website, [www.SSA.gov](http://www.SSA.gov).

People can also reach SSA by calling 800-772-1213 or contacting a local Social Security office.

Local Social Security offices are open by appointment only. All visitors must wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status. Visitors are asked to be prepared to wait outdoors when ability to follow physical distancing requirements is limited indoors and to come alone unless they require help with their visit. If you need help, only one person is allowed to accompany you.

A recent [report](#) by the SSA's Office of Inspector General found that there was a sixty-five percent increase in calls to the SSA during the pandemic.

### **“No Surprises Act” Law is Now in Effect to Dispute Unexpected Medical Bills**



Thanks to the No Surprises Act, Americans are now protected from surprise medical billing. Since January 1, 2022, this new law has begun to protect both the insured and uninsured from surprise medical bills. Consumers have new rights and easy options to dispute unanticipated charges – which is important, since more than half of U.S. consumers report having received an unexpectedly large medical bill.

Surprise medical bills average more than \$1,200 for anesthesia, \$2,600 for surgical assistant fees and \$750 for childbirth. However, the rules have finally changed after causing anguish to patients for decades. Learn about your new rights as a consumer [here](#).

“No one should receive a surprise medical bill or face financial ruin because they were unknowingly treated by an out-of-network provider during emergency care,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Fortunately, patients now have protections.”

### **Obituary: Karen Ferguson, Founder of the Pension Rights Center**

**Karen Ferguson**, the founder of the Pension Rights Center, a nonprofit organization that protects the interests of workers and retirees and helps promote legislation on their behalf, [died on December 23 at her home in Washington, DC](#).



Ms. Ferguson successfully lobbied Congress for numerous pension reforms over more than four decades. She also personally handled thousands of individual claims from people who had worked throughout their adult lives but then had trouble receiving their full pension benefits.

She was instrumental in the creation and passage of the Butch Lewis Act, which was a high priority for many Alliance members. That measure, signed into law last year by President **Biden**, restored the pensions of more than one million people whose retirement benefits had been severely reduced.

“Karen aligned the Pension Rights Center with the Alliance. In addition to working with the Alliance on the Butch Lewis Act and other legislation, she spoke at the Alliance’s Pension

Seminars and generously lent her expertise whenever she was asked,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “She took every opportunity to help people with pensions get the money they earned, and, on a more personal note, was a wonderful friend.”

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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.