



FRIDAY ALERT

Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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Headlines:

Quality Home Care and Public Sector Unions at Risk in Supreme Court Case
More than 13,600 Activists Sign Petition Objecting to Sen. Rubio's Retirement Plan
Resolutions Passed at Las Vegas Convention Now Online
Hearings Examine Strengthening Social Security, Medicare's "Observation Status"
Anti-Worker Bills Die in Missouri Legislature
Fiesta Joins Coalition of Black Trade Unionists Convention in Atlanta

Here is your May 23 *Friday Alert*:

Quality Home Care and Public Sector Unions at Risk in Supreme Court Case

In the coming weeks, the U.S. Supreme Court will issue a ruling in *Harris v. Quinn*, a case involving the payment of union dues by public-sector home health workers in Illinois. The decision could come as early as next week or as late as the end of June. The case, backed by the anti-union National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, was brought by an Illinois woman who argues that the mandatory payment of union dues is a violation of her free speech rights.

Long standing Supreme Court precedent allows public-sector unions to collect fees from non-union members in order to support non-political activities like the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements. A number of disability and senior advocacy organizations, including the American Association of People with Disabilities, have filed briefs arguing that weakening collective bargaining of public-sector home care workers would threaten the reliable care that allows seniors and people with disabilities to remain in their homes.

"The Supreme Court must stop this attempt to radically weaken the collective bargaining power of public-sector unions. When home health workers are able to seek fair compensation through a strong union, seniors receive higher quality care with less turnover among caregivers," said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. Read more about how the ruling might impact home care at <http://tinyurl.com/pha8sqq>.

More than 13,600 Activists Sign Petition Objecting to Sen. Rubio's Retirement Plan

So far, more than 13,600 activists have signed the Alliance petition telling Sen. **Marco Rubio** (R-FL) that now is not the time to cut - but rather, to strengthen and expand - our retirement security system. Last week, Sen. Rubio proposed dismantling Medicare and raising the retirement age (<http://tinyurl.com/pbk2rw>). If you have not yet signed the petition and would like to, please go to <http://tinyurl.com/oxqophe>.

Resolutions Passed at Las Vegas Convention Now Online

The resolutions that were passed recently at the Alliance's national membership convention in Las Vegas are now posted online at <http://retiredamericans.org/issues/resolutions>. The resolutions address such issues as corporate attacks on post-retiree health care and the ultra-conservative agenda of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). Photographs, handouts and additional material from the plenary and action workshops at the conference are also posted on the Alliance web site, at http://retiredamericans.org/newsroom/2014_Convention_Vegas.

Hearings Examine Strengthening Social Security, Medicare's "Observation Status"

This week on Capitol Hill, two separate subcommittees held hearings on retirement issues championed by Senator **Sherrod Brown** (D-OH). The Senate Finance Committee Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy, which Sen. Brown chairs, held a hearing entitled "Strengthening Social Security to Meet the needs of Tomorrow's Retirees." In order to counter stagnant wages and lack of access to private pensions, Sen. Brown called for expanding the Social Security program by changing the benefits formula, adopting a more accurate means of calculating cost of living adjustments (COLA), and increasing benefits for the most vulnerable populations. Read Senator Brown's remarks at <http://1.usa.gov/1jz9iO2>.

The second hearing, held by the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health, focused on hospitals and the Medicare program. The subcommittee discussed the way hospitals are increasingly using an "observation status" patient designation in order to care for patients in the hospital without officially counting them as in-patients. Because the Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) Medicare benefit requires a minimum three day in-patient stay, seniors are discovering they are ineligible for post-acute care as a result of significant portions of their hospital stay having been spent under the "observation status" designation. Sen. Brown has cosponsored a Senate bill which would count time individuals spend under "observation status" towards satisfying the three-day stay requirement - a change which will make it easier for Medicare beneficiaries to access the care they need.

"Addressing the 'observation status' classification will save seniors millions of dollars by making sure that their hospital stays are covered by Medicare as they expected, and not excluded due to a loophole," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance.

Anti-Worker Bills Die in Missouri Legislature

The Missouri state legislature wrapped up its annual session last week without passing a pair of controversial anti-union bills. The first measure, a so-called "right-to-work" bill, came up for a vote in the state House last month and fell four votes shy of moving on to the state Senate. The measure would have prohibited unions from negotiating a security clause with employers. Security clauses require new workers receiving the benefits of a collective bargaining agreement to help pay costs associated with representation. "Right-to-work" laws, often referred to as "Right to Work for Less" laws, are strongly backed by business groups and are associated with reduced salaries and benefits in states in which they have been adopted.

A second bill was related to the issue termed "paycheck protection," which has been referred to as "paycheck deception." It would have required public sector unions to receive annual authorization from individual members to retain membership and provide dues as a source of political campaign contributions. Opponents of the bill argue that such legislation is designed to silence public workers and point out that public sector union members already have the right to opt out of contributing money to their union's political action fund. The bill moved through the state House by a single vote and was set for a final vote in the state Senate before a last minute compromise between Senate Democrats and Republicans ended consideration of the measure. More at <http://bit.ly/RSDKq7>.

"We are grateful for the work of the Missouri Alliance in helping to stop these harmful pieces of legislation," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer for the Alliance.

Fiesta Joins Coalition of Black Trade Unionists Convention in Atlanta

On Wednesday, Mr. Fiesta was in Atlanta for the retirees' conference of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU). He spoke about threats to Social Security and the 2014 midterm elections.

For a printable version of this document, go to <http://tinyurl.com/qeu9km9>.

For the Alliance's Spanish language page, which includes last week's Friday Alert in Spanish, go to www.alianzadejubilados.org



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