

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006

202.637.5399 • www.retiredamericans.org • arafridayalert@retiredamericans.org

May 2, 2008

Release of New Voting Record Commemorates Start of Older Americans Month

Marking the beginning of Older Americans Month, the new 2007 congressional voting record released on May 1 by the Alliance details the voting record of every U.S. Senator and Representative on key issues affecting current and future retirees. The document is available at www.retiredamericans.org. “As our leaders in Washington vote on prescription drugs, Medicare, Social Security, health care, and pensions, politically savvy seniors need to know where their elected officials stand on these important issues,” said Alliance President **George J. Kourpias**. “I am not the only one who worries that this may be the last generation that ever gets to retire,” Kourpias said, noting a recent nationwide survey of seniors in which 88 percent of respondents did not believe their children or grandchildren would have the quality of life that they have had. The Alliance voting record examines 10 key Senate votes and 10 key House votes in 2007, showing the roll calls on blocking Social Security privatization, lowering Medicare costs, expanding access to affordable health care, stopping oil price gouging, and protecting voting rights. The document shows that 244 U.S. House members received passing grades (60 percent or higher), with 176 achieving perfect scores of 100 percent. 189 received failing grades (below 60 percent), with 66 receiving scores of zero. Two seats were vacant during these votes.

In the Senate, 52 members received passing grades (60 percent or higher), with 31 achieving perfect scores of 100 percent. Forty-seven received failing grades (below 60 percent), with 27 receiving scores of zero. Senator **Tim Johnson** (D-SD) missed these votes due to illness. Senators **Hillary Clinton** and **Barack Obama** each scored 100 percent, while Senator **John McCain** scored a zero on the ten votes evaluated by the Alliance in 2007. The widespread voter discontent in the 2006 congressional elections ushered in a new Congress that sought to improve health care, reduce drug prices, and end taxpayer overpayments to private insurance companies who operate Medicare Advantage programs. Unfortunately for America’s seniors, these efforts were stymied by opposition from the White House and pharmaceutical and insurance lobbyists.

Midwestern Regional Meeting Yields Three Regional Board Members

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, the Alliance held its Midwestern Regional Meeting - the third of four regional meetings in 2008 - in St. Louis, Missouri. Speakers included **Robert Kortkamp**, President of the Missouri Alliance, and **Hugh McVey**, President of the Missouri AFL-CIO. Alliance President **George J. Kourpias** swore in the following newly-elected regional board members to the Alliance Executive Board for their sub-regions: **Elmer Blankenship** of Indiana; Missouri’s **Robert Kortkamp**; and **Joyce Hermanstorfer** of Iowa. The final Regional Meeting, the Southern Regional Meeting, will be held June 4-5, 2008 in Orlando, Florida. For copies of the official registration form, call 1-888-373-6497, email **Joni Jones** at jjones@retiredamericans.org, or visit www.retiredamericans.org.

Supreme Court Voter Identification Ruling Burdens Older Voters

States can require voters to produce photo identification, the Supreme Court ruled on Monday, upholding a Republican-inspired law that Democrats say will keep some poor, older and minority voters from casting ballots. Twenty-five states require some form of ID, and the court's decision rejecting a challenge to Indiana's strict voter ID law could encourage others to adopt their own measures. The ruling means the ID requirement will be in effect for next week's presidential primary in Indiana, where a significant number of new voters are expected to turn out for the Democratic contest between Sens. **Hillary Rodham Clinton** and **Barack Obama**. Supporters of the law say it is all about preventing fraud. The court, voting 6-3, rejected Democratic contentions that the Indiana law will impose an unconstitutional burden on seniors. But data elsewhere give reason for concern. "According to a 2005 University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee study, more than 20 percent of Wisconsin's citizens aged 65 and over lack a license or state photo ID, 70 percent of them women," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

New Hampshire Alliance Addresses America's Growing Uninsured

Last Saturday, the New Hampshire Alliance for Retired Americans (NHARA) joined "New Hampshire for Health Care" and other health care advocacy groups in Manchester to kick-off the sixth annual national Cover the Uninsured Week, occurring April 27 - May 3. At a short press conference that was followed by a health care canvass in local neighborhoods, NHARA President **John Mendolusky** addressed the affordability of health care in America, and urged New Hampshire's Senators, **Judd Gregg** and **John Sununu**, to vote to allow Medicare to negotiate with pharmaceutical manufacturers and to support a universal health care system. "Medicare has proved not only to be a huge success but an absolute savior for millions of America's seniors," said Mendolusky. "However, quality, affordable healthcare is not merely a seniors' issue. We demand a system that provides quality, affordable healthcare for our children and grandchildren."

Alliance Loses Pennsylvania Executive Vice President Ellie Kuhns

Ellie Kuhns, Executive Vice President of the Pennsylvania Alliance for Retired Americans, passed away on Sunday, April 27. "Ellie had been a great inspiration to everyone who knew her, whether they were a UNITE/HERE member, a fellow PARA Executive Board member or a member of her community in Shamokin, PA," said **Jean Friday**, President of the Pennsylvania Alliance. Ms. Kuhns' inspiration was recently felt by attendees of the Alliance's 2008 Northeastern Regional Meeting, where she delivered the welcoming speech. "Ellie was a tireless advocate not just for seniors, but for a better life for all people," said **Edward Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "Her passing is a tremendous loss, and she will be sorely missed."

Oregon Alliance Holds Its Convention

The Oregon Alliance held its annual convention last Saturday. The fifty delegates in attendance heard from state legislators, aging advocates, and labor leaders, and discussed issues including long term care.