



NRLN Review

NRLN
NATIONAL RETIREE
LEGISLATIVE NETWORK

***NRLN Review*, Summary for July 2020**

The ***NRLN Review*** provides a monthly report on National Retiree Legislative Network actions, events in Congress and important retirement news.

NRLN Action Alert Issued – Don't Trust the TRUST Act

The NRLN issued an Action Alert on July 30, asking NRLN members to tell their U.S. Senators and Representatives – Don't Trust the TRUST Act.

As the Senate works on the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection and Schools (HEALS) Act, the Senate's new COVID-19 economic stimulus legislation, Utah Senator Mitt Romney and 14 co-sponsors introduced for the crisis legislation the Time to Rescue United States Trust (TRUST) Act.

Whether the TRUST Act is in the COVID-19 legislative language or as a stand-alone bill, it is not in the best interests of America's seniors.

The TRUST Act would create individual "rescue committees" for each of the nation's trust funds, such as Social Security, Medicare and the Highway trust funds. Critics of the TRUST Act, including the NRLN, are alarmed that the "rescue committees" would operate outside of the regular order of Congress, behind closed doors, and their recommendations would be fast-tracked for votes on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

Congress needs to address the shortfalls in the Social Security and Medicare trust funds, but must find a better way than the TRUST Act to ensure solvency of the programs.

Click here access the Action Alert. <https://www.nrln.org/SE.html#/>

Summer 2020 NRLN FOCUS Newsletter

An email was sent to NRLN members on July 22 to invite them to read the summer 2020 edition of the NRLN FOCUS Newsletter. Click here to access the newsletter.

https://www.nrln.org/focus%20newsletter_files/NRLN%20FOCUS%20-%20current.pdf If you have a problem with this link, go to www.nrln.org and click on the link to the newsletter posted in the center column of the NRLN website home page.

The 8-page newsletter includes:

- NRLN President Bill Kadereit's column on Medicare Advantage Quality Bonus Plan Is a House of Cards
- Report on 2020 NRLN Survey Results
- Article on NRLN Grassroots Advocates Team
- NRLN Executive Director Alyson Parker's column on Drug Pricing Legislation Held Hostage

NRLN President's Forum Messages

In a July 23 NRLN President's Forum message, Bill Kadereit said the NRLN is following a number of news reports on what could happen with legislation for the next federal government economic stimulus package in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senate Republicans are at odds over the cost and contents of a possible \$1 trillion legislative bill, the White House is pushing to include the temporary elimination of the payroll tax, while House Democrats are advocating legislation costing \$3 trillion. (In a press briefing on July 23, President Trump said he had accepted the fact that a payroll tax cut would not be in the economic stimulus.)

President Trump's July 24 four executive orders to lower costs on prescription drugs was addressed in Bill Kadereit's NRLN President's Forum message on July 27. President Trump has instructed the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to take these actions:

- Allow Americans to purchase drugs from Canada and other countries at lower cost from pre-authorized U.S. wholesalers and pharmacies.
- Ensure that Medicare and seniors pay no more for the most costly Medicare Part B drugs than any economically comparable country.
- End a system of kickbacks by Price Benefit Managers (PBMs). Seniors will directly receive these kickbacks as discounts in Medicare Part D.
- Require federal health centers who purchase insulins and epinephrine in the 340B program to pass the savings from discounted drug prices directly on to medically underserved patients.
- Authorize the re-importation of insulin products made in the U.S. if the HHS Secretary finds re-importation is required for emergency medical care.

Kadereit said NRLN members should be proud to have supported the NRLN's position on SAFE importation from Canada and then the world, as well as eliminating the PBM kickbacks. From the start of Medicare Part D, the NRLN has been the lead retiree advocate, writing to the President and lobbying Congress to support safe importation and that America's retirees (paying 2-5 times higher) pay no more than the prices U.S. drug companies were charging seniors in other countries.

The message noted that Bob Martina, NRLN's VP Grassroots, said many thousands of members from every state signed petitions, sent action alert messages and made personal contacts, unselfishly, that will benefit every retiree in America.

The NRLN continues to lobby for Congress to enact legislation to remove the prohibition on Medicare negotiating prescription drug prices and replace it with a competitive bidding mandate. Also, the NRLN is continuing to say that legislation should end pay-for-delay and other brand name drugmakers' tactics that keep generic drugs off the market.

NRLN Thanks President for Orders to Reduce Drug Prices

NRLN President Bill Kadereit sent a letter to President Donald Trump on July 28 to thank him for his July 24 executive orders to reduce drug prices.

The President was told the executive orders accomplish much of what the NRLN has been lobbying for since the start of Medicare Part D:

- Allow the importation of safe and less expensive drugs from Canada and other countries that meet FDA standards.
- Ensure that Medicare and seniors pay no more for the most-costly Medicare Part B drugs than any economically comparable country.
- End a system of kickbacks by Price Benefit Managers (PBMs) and allowing seniors to directly receive these kickbacks as discounts in Medicare Part D.

The letter noted the NRLN will continue to lobby for Congress to enact legislation to remove the prohibition on Medicare negotiating prescription drug prices and replace it with a competitive bidding mandate. Also, the NRLN will continue to advocate for legislation to end pay-for-delay and other brand name drugmakers' tactics that keep generic drugs off the market.

In closing the letter, (a copy also to Chief-of-Staff Mark Meadows) Kadereit stated: "Seniors are also very anxious to hear our President declare he will save all of Medicare for America. My hope is you will read the attached paper and believe that privatization of Medicare with Medicare Advantage plans has failed. Unless we contain all healthcare costs, our country will fail nearly 100 million future retirees."

The NRLN's whitepaper on the government's efforts to privatize Medicare was an attachment to the letter. Click here to read the letter. <https://www.nrln.org/ARCHIVES-W.HTML> Click here to read the NRLN's whitepaper on Medicare Advantage.

<https://www.nrln.org/flyin%20whthpr/WP%20Medicare%20Advantage%20Quality%20Bonus%20Plan%20Is%20a%20House%20of%20Cards%20Final%20v2%20060520.pdf>

Campaign Contributions Updated

Bob Martina, NRLN VP – Grassroots, updated the NRLN website on July 21 with information on contributions from the pharmaceutical / health products industry to politicians during the 2019-2020 election cycle. Click here to view the data from OpenSecrets.Org, Center for Responsible Politics.

<https://www.nrln.org/Pharma%20Contributions%20to%20Congress%202019-20%2007-21-20.htm>

NRLN Legislative Committees' Work

The NRLN's Legislative Affairs Committee (LAC) composed of Judy Stenberg, Chairwoman, Deb Morrisett, Joe Mazzei, Al Duscher and Bob Martina submitted the following bills for the Legislative Action Planning Committee (LAPC) to consider for action during its July 6 conference call.

-- **H.R. 2610 / S. 149, Stop Senior Scams Act. S.** Seniors in particular have become targets for criminals who often pose as a family member in distress with the family member's replicated voice to extort money from a senior family member. These crooks even pose as officials of government agencies to create fear to scam their victims. Far too often our nation's seniors have had their identities stolen or even their savings taken by these predators. Passage of the **Stop Senior Scams Act** would charge the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to establish an advisory group called the Senior Scams Prevention Advisory Council. The Advisory Council would be tasked with studying existing and creating new educational materials intended to identify and prevent scams that effect seniors. The Chairman of the FTC would distribute these materials to the public.

-- **H.R. 5076 / S. 1872, Protecting Seniors Through Immunization Act of 2019.** Passage of **H.R. 5076 / S. 1872** would reduce financial barriers by providing Medicare coverage of vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices with no additional cost-sharing for beneficiaries. This would apply immediately to shingles, tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap). Medicare coverage also would apply to new vaccines as they are approved, like the anticipated vaccines against respiratory syncytial virus and clostridium difficile. It should also apply when a vaccine is approved to prevent COVID-19. Too many seniors on Medicare weigh the health benefits of getting immunized against the out-of-pocket cost of immunizations.

The LAPC composed of Bill Kadereit, Chairman, Alyson Parker, Judy Stenberg, Bob Martina and Ed Beltram made the following decisions on its July 6 conference call.

-- **H.R. 2610 / S. 149, Stop Senior Scams Act. S. 149** was passed by the Senate on June 15, 2020 and received in the House on the same date. Letter was emailed on July 7, 2020 to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi requesting that the House take action on the **Stop Senior Scams Act** passed by the Senate. It was pointed out that the companion bill, **H.R.2610, Stop Senior Scams Act**, has been pending in the Committee on Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce since May 10, 2019.

-- **H.R. 5076 / S. 1872, Protecting Seniors Through Immunization Act of 2019.** Letters requesting committee vote on the **H.R. 5076** were emailed on July 7, 2020 to Chairman Frank Pallone (NJ-06) and Ranking Member Greg Walden (OR-02), Committee on Energy and Commerce, and to Chairman Richard Neal (MA-01) and Ranking Member Kevin Brady (TX-08), Committee on Ways and Means. Letters requesting committee vote on **S. 1872** were emailed on July 7, 2020 to Chairman Chuck Grassley (IA) and Ranking Member Ron Wyden (OR), Committee on Finance.

-- **H.R. 5815 – Locality Based Social Security Act of 2019.** Since the NRLN is on record as supporting the **H.R. 860 / S. 269, Social Security 2100 Act**, the LAPC agreed with the LAC's recommendation to table and monitor **H.R. 5815**.

H.R. 2610 / S. 149 and H.R. 5076 / S. 1872 have been posted on the NRLN Bills webpage. <https://www.nrln.org/SE.html/congresslegs.html#/bills> Copies of the letters have been posted on the Letters to Washington webpage. <https://www.nrln.org/ARCHIVES-W.HTML>

Click here to access the NRLN Report Card to learn whether your Representative and Senators are cosponsors of these bills. <https://www.nrln.org/SE.html/congresslegs.html#/legislators/> Select your state on the USA map and when your state's Congressional delegation appears, click on the EXCEL DOWNLOAD link. After the download is completed, click on "Enable Editing" in the upper right of the EXCEL page to view titles of the bills. If you wish, once the report card is downloaded, details on each bill can be accessed by clicking on the bill's title.

Links to Key News Articles Posted in July

During July, 81 links to news articles related to retirement issues were researched and posted daily IN THE NEWS on the NRLN website home page. Click here to read the articles listed below and other articles.

<https://www.nrln.org>

Here are examples of the headlines:

Retirees, Beware These Tax Traps on Social Security and Medicare – July 2

Opinion: Why drug costs for older Americans should be capped in pandemic's wake – July 2

5 Reasons Social Security Benefit Cuts Could Be Happening Sooner Than Expected. Will you be left with smaller checks? – July 5

What Seniors Should Know Before Going Ahead With Elective Procedures – July 6

How to handle your Medicare coverage if you move to another state – July 7

Trump May Use Defense Powers to Require Domestic Drug Production – July 7

Walgreens dives into primary care with clinic expansion – July 8

DOL Proposes Fiduciary Exemption For Retirement Plans – July 10

The coronavirus pandemic could lead to Social Security cuts happening sooner than you think – July 16

Democrats use inspector general report to renew calls for Medicare chief's ouster – July 16

Opinion: As Pension Fears Peak In Covid-19 Era, Prepare For Battle To Protect Your Pension – July 17

Commentary: These Pension Plans Are in Crisis. Retirees Need a Fix, Now. – July 20

Opinion: Older Americans: A Glaring Omission In Pandemic Priorities – July 21

Column: Another Problem on the Health Horizon: Medicare Is Running Out of Money – July 22

Commentary: Trump's 'Most Favored Nation' Prescription Drug Executive Order Will Reduce Costs For Seniors & Taxpayers – July 24

A Step-by-Step Guide to Selecting Medicare Coverage – July 25

360 Democratic delegates say they'll oppose party platform that does not include 'Medicare for All' – July 27

Opinion: Will Coronavirus Or Politics Kill Social Security? – July 28, 2020

Health care price transparency bill can reduce costs and boost national economic recovery – July 28

A Bill in the Works Could Help Seniors Avoid Costly Medicare Mistakes – July 29

Opinion: COVID-19 may be why your Social Security benefits drop – July 30