



NRLN Review



NRLN Review, Summary for April 2022

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

NRLN Produces Video/Podcast on Need to Reduce Prescription Drug Prices

The NRLN has produced Video/Podcast Series 2, Episode 3 for 2022 – **Congress Must Take Action to Reduce the Price of Prescription Drugs**. In the April 13 episode, NRLN President Bill Kadereit and Ed Beltram, NRLN VP-Communications, addressed the high cost of prescription drugs, how an Rx discount card provides savings, NRLN lobbying efforts to reduce drug prices, and House and Senate bills we support.

View the Video/Podcast at www.nrln.org by clicking on the “play arrow” in the center column. Or watch it on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5y65m8ajuFQ>

Sixty-four million Americans on Medicare are caught in the terrible perfect storm of prescription drug price gouging. They are taking more expensive medications while living on fixed incomes. Even with their Medicare Part D prescription drug plan they are paying substantial out-of-pocket costs. This means that they especially feel the pain of pharmaceutical companies’ relentless price increases while bills that would provide lower prices have not been enacted.

NRLN Video/Podcast - Denial of Access to Medicare Supplement Plan Premiums

The NRLN has produced on April 4 Video/Podcast Series 2, Episode 2 for 2022 – **Denial of Access to Medicare Supplement Plan Premiums**. It addressed the basics of Medicare, including Medigap plans; higher premium Medigap plans sold to Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) retirees by a Private Medicare Exchange (PME), and access to Medigap plan information.

View the Video/Podcast at www.nrln.org by clicking on the “play arrow” in the center column. Or watch it on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoDPyIM12LM> .

Joining NRLN President Bill Kadereit for the presentation are **Bonnie Burns**, a consultant to California Health Advocates and an expert in Medigap plans. **Jim Bodner**, President, NRLN Villages Chapter, who has a long history of dealing with Medicare as a former owner of a Michigan elder care facility. **Ed Beltram**, NRLN Vice President – Communications.

NRLN Action Alert Requests Support for S.1770

Constituents of Senators who are members of the Committee on Finance were asked to respond to the April 11 NRLN Action Alert requesting the Committee approve **S.1770, Retirement Security and Savings Act of 2021**.

The NRLN has two proposals in the bill which will be highly beneficial to retirees who have a defined benefit pension from their former employer.

Section 405, Enhancing retiree health benefits in pension plans, would amend Section 420 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to allow employers with generously overfunded pension plans (110% and higher) to use a portion of the plan's surplus assets to fund important retiree benefits, which are otherwise not vested and are at risk.

This means that retirees of single employer pension plan sponsor would have a much better chance of not only retaining their healthcare benefits, but also life insurance benefits. Amending Section 420 would not jeopardize the security of pension benefits.

Section 322, Recovery of retirement plan overpayments, would change unlimited pension recoupment to within three years of the initial overpayment; limit recoupment to not more than 10% of the overpayment per year and exclude recoupment against a beneficiary.

NRLN Action Alert – It's Time to Provide Health Coverage Tax Credit

The NRLN Action Alert issued on April 27 requested help from NRLN members to email the NRLN's sample letter to their Representative and Senators to ask them to introduce a bill to make Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) permanent or at least extend it through the end of 2022.

HCTC has helped individuals, ages 55-65, who lost their healthcare coverage -- in addition to PBGC taking over their pensions -- when their employers either went bankrupt or laid off workers due to foreign trade.

Since 2002, Congress had extended HCTC on a year-to-year basis until this year. In Section 137508 of H.R.5376, the Build Back Better Act, HCTC would have been made permanent and the amount of the qualified health insurance premium covered by the tax credit increased from 72.5% to 80%.

The Build Back Better Act, the centerpiece of President Joe Biden's domestic agenda, was passed in the House but failed to be passed by the Senate. This has left tens of thousands of individuals and family members facing higher healthcare costs at a time of high inflation.

NRLN Continues to Seek Justice for TVA Retirees

On April 8, NRLN President sent an email to members of the TVA Retirees Chapter to inform them that the NRLN is continuing efforts to gain a Special Enrollment Period for TVA retirees who were sold a Medigap plan at inflated premiums by a Private Medicare Exchange.

Kadereit explained that during recent weeks Alyson Parker, NRLN Executive Director, and he have had a number of conference calls with Congressional staff members about the injustice TVA retirees experienced after the Tennessee Valley Authority terminated retirees' healthcare coverage. He stated that he was following up on those conference calls by sending written documentation on what was discuss with the Congressional staff members.

In addition, earlier this week the NRLN produced a video/podcast that has segments on what TVA retirees experienced in dealing with OneExchange (now Via Benefits). The link to the video/podcast is noted twice in the document sent to Capitol Hill. View Series 2 Episode 2 in the NRLN video/podcast library on the NRLN website at: <https://www.nrln.org/nrln-medicare-videos/> or on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoDPyIM12LM>

It has taken a large amount of time to deal with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Tennessee

Department of Commerce and Insurance, and Congressional staff members. One thing the NRLN has learned in its 20 years it takes persistence and the NRLN is not giving up on TVA retirees.

AT&T Associations Requested NRLN Members Support

Members of a number of NRLN Associations and Chapters, AT&T, Avaya, CenturyLink, Chrysler, DuPont, General Motors, Kodak, and possibly others, have unfortunately had their life insurance benefit reduced or eliminated. The NRLN was able to get legislation introduced to protect “welfare” benefits by amending ERISA (Employee Retirement Income Security Act). However, the bill was never passed by Congress.

Our two Associations representing AT&T retirees, AT&T Ameritech/SBC Retirees and TelCo Retirees Association put forth a great deal of effort in 2021 to try to convince AT&T executives and board members they had made the wrong decision to reduce life insurance from the equivalent of one year’s pay to \$15,000 for salaried and \$25,000 for bargained-for effective January 1, 2022. While most AT&T retirees have had their life insurance benefit reduced, the associations collaborated to provide documents that forced AT&T to agree that individuals who retired prior to 1990 would be grandfathered for the full amount of their life insurance.

On April 26 NRLN President Bill Kadereit issued an email stating our two Associations composed of AT&T retirees are requesting the support of other NRLN members who own AT&T stock to vote against AT&T’s recommendations on proxy statements for the May 19, 2022, AT&T annual shareowners meeting. We can’t know whether NRLN members who get this email are AT&T shareholders, so we apologize to those who don’t own AT&T stock and thank them for understanding.

The email requested that if NRLN members own AT&T stock to go to the Associations’ websites to see the actions they each are taking on the proxy proposals and decide whether to do the same. AASBCR’s website is at <https://www.aasbcr.org/>. TelCo’s website is at <https://www.telcoretirees.org/>.

NRLN Legislative Committees’ Work

The NRLN’s Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) composed of Judy Stenberg, Chairwoman, Deb Morrissett, Joe Mazzei, Al Duscher and Bob Martina submitted the following bills for the Legislative Action Planning Committee (LAPC) to consider for action during its April 4 conference call. The LAPC includes Bill Kadereit, Chairman, Judy Stenberg, Alyson Parker, Bob Martina and Ed Beltram. The LAPC’s actions included:

H.R.2144/S1450, Access to Genetic Counselor Services Act of 2021, would provide reimbursement of services furnished by board-certified genetic counselors under Medicare Part B.

-- Letters were emailed on April 4, 2022, to House Subcommittee on Health Chairwoman Anna Eshoo (CA-18) and Ranking Member Brett Guthrie (KY-02) requesting a Subcommittee vote on **H.R.2144**. Letters were emailed on April 4, 2022, to Senate Committee on Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (OR) and Ranking Member Michael Crapo (ID) requesting a Committee vote on **S.1450**.

H.R.6392, No Tax Breaks for Drug Ads Act, and **S.141, End Taxpayer Subsidies for Drug Ads Act**, would prohibit pharmaceutical drug manufacturers from claiming tax deductions for expenses on advertising directly to consumers. Under current law, drug manufacturers are allowed to deduct the cost of advertising expenses from federal taxes. Advertising increases demand and motivates drug companies to increase prices.

-- Letters were emailed on April 4, 2022, to House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal (MA-01) and Ranking Member Kevin Brady (TX-08) requesting a Committee vote on **H.R.6392**. Letters were emailed on April 4, 2022, to Senate Committee on Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (OR) and Ranking Member Michael Crapo (ID) requesting a Committee vote on **S.141**.

H.R.6710, Protecting American Lives (PAL) Act of 2022, would begin the work of bringing medical supply chains back within the United States and safe from foreign interference. The bill would require the Federal Drug Administration to report to Congress within 180 days on barriers, including regulatory inefficiencies, to

domestic manufacturing of active pharmaceutical ingredients, finished drug products, and devices that are imported from outside the United States and critical to Americans during a public health emergency. The report would be charged with identifying factors that limit the manufacturing of active pharmaceutical ingredients, finished drug products, and devices and recommend specific strategies to overcome any barriers.

-- Letters were emailed on April 4, 2022, to House Committee on Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone (NJ-06) and Ranking Member Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-05) requesting a Committee vote on **H.R.6710**.

S.3675, Beneficiary Enrollment Notification and Eligibility Simplification (BENES) 2.0 Act, would simplify Medicare enrollment for seniors and people with disabilities. The bill would require the federal government to provide advance notice to people approaching Medicare eligibility about basic Medicare enrollment rules. Currently, seniors who miss the sign-up deadline for Medicare Part B face penalties that persist for the rest of their lives.

-- Letters were emailed on April 4, 2022, to Senate Committee on Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (OR) and Ranking Member Michael Crapo (ID) requesting a Committee vote on **S.3675**.

All of the bills listed above have been posted on the NRLN website Bills webpage at: <https://www.nrln.org/legislative-action-network/#/bills> The Bills webpage feeds the NRLN's Report Card showing whether Representatives and Senators in each state are cosponsors of bills the NRLN supports or opposes. Go to: <https://www.nrln.org/legislative-action-network/#/legislators/> and click on your state. Click on EXCEL DOWNLOAD when your state's Congressional delegation appears.

The NRLN webmaster has posted all of the letters noted above in Letters to Washington in the NRLN Archives at: <https://www.nrln.org/letters-to-washington-2/>

Key News Articles Posted in April

During April 44 links to news articles related to retirement issues were researched and posted daily IN THE NEWS on the NRLN website home page. The headlines below are links to the articles. Or, read the articles at www.nrln.org under IN THE NEWS in the right column. Scroll down the right column and click on the headline to access the article you want to read. Below are some of the headlines.

[**CMS finalizes 8.5% rate hike for Medicare Advantage, Part D plans in 2023**](#) ~ Apr 04

[*More lawmakers ratchet up pressure on CMS to overturn Aduhelm coverage proposal*](#) ~ Apr 04

[**Free At-Home Covid Tests Now Available For People On Medicare**](#) ~ Apr 05

[*Could raising the full retirement age solve the problem of Social Security benefit cuts?*](#) ~ Apr 06

[**Medicare weighs premium cut after limiting Alzheimer's drug**](#) ~ Apr 07

[*Pursuit of profit bodes ill for US healthcare*](#) ~ Apr 10

[**Your Social Security Number: When Is It OK to Give It Out?**](#) ~ Apr 09

[**Opinion: Congress must pass comprehensive drug pricing reforms that include Medicare negotiation**](#)

~ Apr 09, 2022

[**FDA Could Get 30-Day Mandate To Tackle Opening Hearing Aid Access**](#) ~ Apr 11

[*FDA Exploring Route To Cheaper Drugs Through Imports*](#) ~ Apr 12

[**Americans Want Generic Drugs Made in US: Poll**](#) ~ Apr 13

[*Gas is going up, but this is how inflation really hurts older Americans*](#) ~ Apr 13

[**How Congress plans to buoy your retirement savings**](#) ~ Apr 14

[*Scams targeting veterans' pensions, benefits raise worry among VA officials*](#) ~ Apr 14

[**Surprise Billing Dispute Resolution Process Gets More Complex**](#) ~ Apr 15

[*Industry Voices—The White House and credit bureaus agree: Medical debt is not really 'debt'*](#) ~ Apr 15

[**White House Covid Czar Recommends Second Booster For People Over 60**](#) ~ Apr 18

[*Opinion: Soaring inflation is hitting retirement savings hard. Here's how best to manage yours*](#) ~ Apr 19

[**CMS Proposes Updates to Reduce Barriers to Coverage, Simplify Medicare Enrollment and Expand Access**](#) ~ Apr 22

[*Medicare Plans Special Enrollment Options For Some Seniors*](#) ~ Apr 25

[**White House Pushes To Make Covid Drug Paxlovid More Accessible**](#) ~ Apr 26

[*Here's how the Senate could change your 401\(k\) plan*](#) ~ Apr 26

[Wondering Why Your RMD Just Got Smaller?](#) ~ Apr 28