



NRLN Review, Summary for February 2024

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

NRLN Launching IBM / Kyndryl Retirees Chapter

In February, the NRLN began the process of launching an IBM / Kyndryl Retirees Chapter. IBM retirees were among the founding members of the NRLN. Kyndryl was spun off from IBM in November 2021 as the world's largest provider of IT infrastructure services.

The NRLN is investigating whether there was an injustice to IBM retirees when IBM changed healthcare offerings to retirees. On September 14, 2022, IBM announced that on January 1, 2023, U.S. retirees would be prevented from using Future Health Account/Healthcare Reimbursement Account (FHA/HRA) funds to pay for anything other than the two Medicare Advantage plans specified by IBM. The NRLN is endeavoring to gain additional information through an online survey to help determine whether IBM must offer retirees a Supplemental Enrollment Period (SEP) and "Guaranteed Issue Rights" for a Medigap plan under Medicare Federal law.

IBM retirees are requested to participate in the NRLN's brief survey to provide their input about IBM's change to retirees' healthcare coverage and the impact that it has had on them and their family. The survey is available at: <https://surveymonkey.com/r/NRLNIBM>.

NRLN Legislative Committees' Work

The NRLN's Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) composed of Judy Stenberg, Chairwoman, Deb Morrissett, Joe Mazzei and Al Duscher prioritizes retirement-related bills it reviews during its twice-a-month conference calls. The LAC submitted the following bills for the Legislative Action Priorities Committee (LAPC) to consider for action.

The LAPC, which includes Bill Kadereit, Chairman, Judy Stenberg, Alyson Parker, Martha Deahl and Ed Beltram, took the actions below on the bills during its February 4 conference call.

The bills have been posted on the NRLN website at: <https://nrln.org/legislative-action-network/#/bills>. The posted bills feed the NRLN Report Card. For instructions on how to access the Report Card go to www.nrln.org. Click on the Grassroots tab and select Congressional Report Card in the dropdown menu. Letters sent to Washington, DC are posted at: <https://nrln.org/letters-to-washington-2/>.

The work of the LAC and the LAPC provides the cornerstone for much of the dealings with members of Congress and their staff members.

H.R.4153/S.2009, Senior Legal Hotline Act of 2023 would boost federal funding for senior legal hotlines that help protect older Americans from scams and offer services for an assortment of other legal issues. It would authorize the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living to create a competitive grant program to support organizations that operate senior legal hotlines. The proposed grant program would be authorized at \$10 million per year for five years.

-- On February 10, 2024, NRLN President Bill Kadereit sent letters to House Committee on Education and the Workforce. Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (NC-05) and Ranking Member Bobby Scott (VA-03) requesting a vote in Committee vote **H.R.4153**.

-- On February 10, 2024, NRLN President Bill Kadereit sent letters to Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. Chairman Bernie Sanders (VT) and Ranking Member Bill Cassidy (LA) requesting a vote in Committee on **S.2009**.

H.R.5060/S.2627, Women's Retirement Protection Act would expand the requirement that spousal consent regardless of gender is required for plan participant actions in not just defined benefit pension plans but also defined contribution plans. This will prevent one spouse from making decisions that might undermine a couple's retirement resources without the other's knowledge and consent.

-- On February 10, 2024, NRLN President Bill Kadereit sent letters to House Committee on Education and the Workforce Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (NC-05) and Ranking Member Bobby Scott (VA-03); Committee on Financial Services Chairman Patrick McHenry (NC10) and Ranking Member Maxine Waters (CA43), and Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith (MO08) and Ranking Member Richard Neal (MA01), requesting a vote in Committee on **H.R.5060**.

-- On February 10, 2024, NRLN President Bill Kadereit sent letters to Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Chairman Bernie Sanders (VT) and Ranking Member Bill Cassidy (LA) requesting a vote in Committee on **S.2627**.

H.R.6802, Rolling Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient and Drug (RAPID) Reserve Act would require the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to award contracts to quality generic drug manufacturers, who are either based in the United States or in a country that is a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), to build and maintain reserves of critical drugs. The legislation would require awardees to keep sufficient reserves of key ingredients and finished drug products on hand and bolster production capacity to help prevent potential shortages before they occur.

H.R.6802 would also help encourage domestic production of these medications by ensuring that U.S. based manufacturers are prioritized for federal contracts. This proposed legislation builds on recommendations from 2019 and 2023 reports which found that generic drug manufacturers' ability to surge production and store supplies are often limited because they regularly operate at or near full capacity.

On September 12, 2023, the NRLN had sent a letter to Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Chairman Bernie Sanders (VT) and Ranking Member Bill Cassidy (LA) requesting a vote in the Committee on **S.2510** the companion bill to **H.R.6802**.

-- On February 10, 2024, NRLN President Bill Kadereit sent letters to House Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health Chairman Brett Guthrie (KY02) and Ranking Member Anna Eshoo (CA16) requesting a vote in committee on **H.R.6802**.

S.3458, Seniors' Access to Critical Medications Act of 2023 would make permanent a waiver issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that allowed for Medicare patients to receive critical medications by mail or allow for caregivers and family members to obtain medications for them.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), CMS allowed independent physicians to mail medications directly to their patients or have them delivered by a family member or caregiver, if a Medicare patient was unable to be present in the office. CMS has ruled that the end of the COVID-19 PHE marks the

end of such policies. This legislation would allow for patients to have medications delivered to them via the mail, or by those overseeing their care.

On December 5, 2023 the NRLN had sent a letter to House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith (MO08) and Ranking Member Richard Neal (MA01), requesting a vote in Committee the on **H.R.5526** the companion bill to **S.3458**.

-- On February 10, 2024, NRLN President Bill Kadereit sent letters to Senate Committee on Finance Ron Wyden (OR) and Ranking Member Mike Crapo (ID), requesting a vote in Committee on **S.3458**.

H.R.6065/S.3102, Retirement Saving for Americans Act of 2023 would improve retirement security and financial well-being for low- and middle-income American workers. Specifically, the bill would establish a new program that gives eligible workers access to portable, tax-advantaged retirement savings accounts. It would also offer federal matching contributions for low- and middle-income workers, with the match beginning to phase out at median income.

-- On February 10, 2024, NRLN President Bill Kadereit sent letters to House Committee on Education and the Workforce. Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (NC-05) and Ranking Member Bobby Scott (VA-03) and Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith (MO08) and Richard Neal (MA01), requesting a vote in Committee on **H.R.6065**.

-- On February 10, 2024, NRLN President Bill Kadereit sent letters to Senate Committee on Finance Ron Wyden (OR) and Ranking Member Mike Crapo (ID), requesting a vote in Committee on **S.3102**.

The LAC tabled and will monitor the following bill:

H.R.4034/S.1922 -- To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide coverage for wigs as durable medical equipment under the Medicare program.

-- The LAPC accepted the LAC's recommendation to table and monitor **H.R.4034/S.1922**

Key News Articles Posted in February

During February, 60 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 headline links.

[Medicare Advantage Plans Face Uncertainty Due to Changing Costs](#) – February 29

[Senate passes spending bill, punting shutdown threat to next week](#) – February 29

[Why some Medicare Advantage plans will get skimpier and costlier](#) – February 26

[Some Medicare Advantage Freebies Might Disappear Soon](#) – February 26

[Americans Paid \\$11 Billion for Drugs You Can't Afford](#) – February 25

[Daylight saving time starts soon: What if we stopped changing the clocks?](#) – February 25

[Opinion: The AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act will help protect our emergency infrastructure](#) – February 24

[Opinion: Both Biden and Trump have their heads in the sand on Social Security. There's a fix.](#) – February 24

[Seniors In Medicare Advantage As Happy As Others Despite Hassles, New Survey Shows](#) – February 22

[AI blamed for wrong Medicare Advantage denials](#) – February 22

[Washington puzzles over AI in health care](#) – February 22

[Former CMS administrator: Hospital-Medicare Advantage tensions 'a manifestation of an underlying broken system'](#) – February 21

[Health costs, medical bills are top economic concern among voters: Poll](#) – February 21

[High-profile House retirements reflect the toxicity on Capitol Hill](#) – February 21

[Help Paying Medicare Premiums: Programs to Know](#) – February 20

[Insurers brace for continued Medicare Advantage medical costs](#) – February 20

3 Ways Changes to Social Security's Full Retirement Age Hurts Future Retirees – February 20

CMS issues guidance on allowing Medicare beneficiaries to pay Rx costs monthly – February 19

Social Security to Make Major Payroll Change – February 19

Midlands Voices: Americans deserve to know why their drugs are so expensive – February 18

Opinion: Americans Deserve Fairer Social Security Taxes – February 17

Medicare Grocery Allowance: What to Know – February 16

Patients see 1st savings from Biden's drug price push – February 16

Half of rural hospitals in the red, pressured by high Medicare Advantage enrollment – February 15

How Sempre Health, Mark Cuban And More Are Leading The Charge To Disrupt Drug Pricing –

February 15

Opinion: Affordable prescription drugs need bipartisan patent reform – February 14

Senate panel grills pharmaceutical company execs over prescription drug prices – February 9

CBO Shows the U.S. Is Paddling Toward the Fiscal Falls – February 9, 2024

Senators working on legislation to reform how Medicare pays physicians – February 9

Social Security, Medicare Trouble Ahead? Money Pros Weigh In. – February 7

Sen. Ron Wyden calls on Biden to fire Social Security's top watchdog – February 7

Beyond science fiction: AI meets health care – February 5, 2024

Let the Medicare Advantage lobbying begin – February 5

Republicans Are Planning to Totally Privatize Medicare — And Fast – February 5

Social Security: 2 Ways Washington Wants to Change Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) – February

3

Medicare drug price negotiations kick off with price offers on these 10 drugs – February 2

'Emergency' or not, covid is still killing people – February 2