



# NRLN Review

**NRLN**  
NATIONAL RETIREE  
LEGISLATIVE NETWORK

## **NRLN Review, Summary for April 2024**

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

### **IBM / Kyndryl Retirees Chapter President Sent Update to Members**

Hector Saenz, IBM / Kyndryl Retirees Chapter President and NRLN Board Member, sent an email on April 11 to Chapter members to provide them an update on actions by the Chapter and the NRLN to determine whether there was an injustice to IBM retirees when IBM changed its healthcare benefit.

Saenz's email included an attachment with the results of a survey to gain information and comments from IBM retirees about the changes to their healthcare insurance options. A second attachment included a copy of a letter that Saenz and NRLN President Bill Kadereit sent on April 8 to the IBM Chairman and CEO about the company's decision to eliminate financial support for Medicare supplement plan (Medigap) premiums and only supporting the option for one of two Medicare Advantage plans.

After noting IBM's financial success, a paragraph in the letter stated: "However, based on an NRLN / Chapter survey of IBM retirees, many now believe IBM executives have lost IBM's moral compass and have become indifferent toward its retirees. That is not so good. The appearance created is that IBM made a callous attempt to coerce retirees into switching from 2022 plan coverage to new coverage of two new UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage PPO plans effective 1/1/2023."

The closing paragraph stated: "Finally, as IBM's CEO, we implore you to learn just how much of the \$11.2 billion free cash flow it would take to allow retirees to exhaust the full amount of their HRA balances over their remaining years. You can reconsider and restore them. IBM's storied history of evenhanded employee / retiree relations is a legacy.

Saenz wrote that if a response is received from the IBM Chairman and CEO or a member of his executive team, he would inform Chapter members.

### **NRLN Action Alert – Don't Harm Seniors with a House Study Committee Budget Proposals**

The NRLN issued an Action Alert on April 8 asking NRLN members to send an email to their U.S. Representative, Republican or Democrat, to say they are against the harm to seniors that a House Study Committee's Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposal would do to Social Security and Medicare by:

- Cutting over \$1.5 trillion from Social Security.

- Increasing the retirement age to 69 from the current age 67 which is a reduction in lifetime benefits. Many are not physically able to work until age 67 to receive full benefits.
- Raising Medicare costs by stopping Medicare from negotiating prescription drug prices, repealing \$35 insulin, and preventing Medicare's \$2,000 out-of-pocket cap on prescription drugs beginning in 2025.
- Transitioning Medicare to a premium support system that the Congressional Budget Office has found would raise premiums for many seniors.

## Two Bloomberg Articles Reported on Kodak's Action with Pension Plan

On April 1, NRLN President Bill Kadereit emailed a message to Kodak Retirees Chapter members to share a link to a March 28 Bloomberg article with the headline: *Kodak's Pension Windfall Points to \$137 Billion Opportunity*. It was a follow up article to Bloomberg's *Kodak Explores Tapping Pension Fund's \$1.2 Billion Surplus* article on March 1 that Kadereit had shared with Kodak retirees.

The second Bloomberg article used the Kodak announcement as a linchpin to describe how companies are taking action to annuitize pensions and are reverting pension surplus assets for company use, thus reducing liabilities and creating cash for companies to spend on annual operating expenses and / or to start up a new pension plan.

The NRLN is working the staff of a Congressional Committee to get its proposal included in pension legislation to protect pension plan participants when a plan sponsor (possibly Kodak) does "de-risking" (Pension Risk Transfer), converting a pension plan to annuities from one or more insurance companies. This strips retirees of federal law protections. Foremost among protections that the NRLN wants to become law is our statute proposal that an annuity contract must include full reinsurance of monthly benefit payments. Only a group annuity contract that requires independent, third-party reinsurance with a highly rated insurance company can protect plan participants.

## Key News Articles Posted in April

During April, 57 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](http://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.

[\*Fraud, waste and abuse: How some doctors are exploiting Medicare and turning patients into 'cash cows'\*](#) – April 30, 2024

[\*\*Judge rejects J&J, Bristol Myers Squibb challenges to Medicare drug-price negotiations\*\*](#) – April 29  
[\*Social Security isn't keeping up with inflation. That could weaken Biden's support among some seniors\*](#) – April 28

[\*\*More than 3 million Medicare patients could be eligible for coverage of Wegovy to reduce heart disease risks, study says\*\*](#) – April 24

[\*Medicare Stumbles Managing a Costly Problem – Chronic Illness\*](#) – April 24

[\*\*Humana warns of tough times ahead for Medicare Advantage\*\*](#) – April 24

[\*FTC looking to accelerate inquiry into prescription-drug middlemen, chair says\*](#) – April 23

[\*\*Biden administration sets higher staffing mandates. Most nursing homes don't meet them\*\*](#) – April 23

[\*3 big changes coming to Medicare in 2025—and what they'll mean for you\*](#) – April 22

[\*\*Social Security Chief Issues Update: 'Crisis'\*\*](#) – April 22

[\*What Will Happen If The Social Security Trust Funds Run Out?\*](#) – April 20

[\*\*New Medicare Card Scams on the Rise\*\*](#) – April 19

[\*Where Does Medicare Go From Here: Profit-Driven Chaos or Patient-Centered Community?\*](#) – April 19

[\*\*Welcome to 'peak boomer' era: A wave of retirees is about to blow through their savings and cling to Social Security to stay afloat\*\*](#) – April 19

[\*\*Social Security to stay afloat\*\*](#) – April 19

[\*What Happens to My Pension if My Company Goes Bankrupt?\*](#) – April 19

[\*\*UnitedHealth CEO Warns of 3-Year Medicare Squeeze\*\*](#) – April 18

[\*Arizona Rep. Ruben Gallego Proposes Legislation to Increase Social Security COLAs for Seniors\*](#) – April 18

**Medicare's push to improve chronic care attracts businesses, but not many doctors** – April 17

*CWA Union Fights Back Against So-Called Pension De-Risking* – April 17

**Medicare Advantage cuts may impact nursing homes** – April 10

*More Health Systems Likely to Drop Out of Medicare Advantage, Analyst Predicts* – April 10

**Home healthcare for elderly sees largest price increase ever** – April 10

*Medicare Drug Price Negotiations: Policy Implications Of The First 10 Drugs' Features* – April 9

**Social Security Office of Inspector General warns of scammers posing as agents, seeking in-person meetings, cash** – April 9

*America's Social Security Timebomb* – April 9

**Medicare Advantage Cuts Pressure Nursing Homes** – April 8

*Examining High Drug Costs In America. What You Need To Know* – April 8

**Ten doctors on FDA panel reviewing Abbott heart device had financial ties with company** – April 8

*It's Past Time For An Upgrade To The Medicare Hospice Benefit* – April 5

**Top GOP lawmaker believes he can 'fix' Social Security** – April 7

*Seniors to Lose Some Benefits After Medicare Advantage Cuts* – April 3

**'We beat big pharma': Biden applauds IRA, calls for expansion of Medicare negotiations** – April 3

*Social Security Reform Plan Proposed to Congress* – April 3

**Biden, Senator Bernie Sanders push companies to cut cost of asthma inhalers, prescription drugs** – April 3

*US takes next step in Medicare drug price negotiations with pharma companies* – April 2

**Most CFOs say collecting from Medicare Advantage is getting harder** – April 2

*Health Insurers Tumble as Final Medicare Advantage Rates Disappoint* – April 1

**Republicans warm to Social Security, Medicare reform as 2024 election nears** – April 1