

# **NYSARA Monday Alert**

**March 29, 2021**

**Produced by the New York State  
Alliance for Retired Americans**

Medicaid Matters	Executive proposal	Assembly one-house	Senate one-house
Repeal the Medicaid cap	Extends for add'l two years	Rejects; repeals the cap	Rejects; resists alternative to repeal
Oppose across-the-board cuts	Imposes 1% across-the-board cut	Rejects	Rejects
Enhance home care workforce; support #FairPay4HomeCare	Reduces Home Care Workforce Recruitment & Retention (R&R) fund	Rejects; \$20m for new workforce R&R of nursing home certified nursing assistants and home care personal aides; does not include FairPay4HomeCare	Rejects; includes \$20m toward FairPay4HomeCare
Repeal restricted eligibility for Managed Long Term Care (ADL requirement enacted in 2020)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Protect adult home residents	Zeroes out funding for CBOs that provide advocacy; zeroes out EQUAL funding	Restores both	Restores both
Expand coverage for immigrants; support #Coverage4All	N/A	Adds Essential Plan coverage for immigrants who had COVID and are not eligible for coverage due to their immigration status	Adds Essential Plan coverage for immigrants who had COVID and are not eligible for coverage due to their immigration status
Protect safety-net hospitals	Eliminates indigent care pool (ICP) funds for public hospitals	Rejects	Rejects
Protect community-based safety-net providers impacted by loss of 340B savings	Includes \$102 million to create reinvestment payment pool for community health centers	Rejects reinvestment funds; delays transition of the pharmacy benefit from managed care to fee-for-service (enacted 2020) for 3 years for providers that rely on 340B savings	Rejects reinvestment funds; repeals transition of the pharmacy benefit from managed care to fee-for-service (enacted 2020)



Protect public health funding for NYC	Cuts public health funding for NYC	Rejects	Rejects
Strengthen the Essential Plan	Eliminates premiums for EP1 (the lower-income category)	Accepts; eliminates all cost-sharing for dental and vision	Accepts; eliminates cost-sharing for dental and vision
Fully fund consumer assistance	Provides base level funding for Community Health Advocates (CHA) program	Provides additional funding for CHA	Provides additional funding for CHA; includes language to codify CHA
Protect access to prescription drugs	Eliminates “prescriber prevails”; eliminates coverage for certain over-the-counters	Restores both	Restores both

**New in the Assembly and Senate one-house bills**

<b>Assembly</b>	<b>Senate</b>	<b>Enacted</b>
Expands Child Health Plus to cover Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) services		
Prevents transition of TBI/NHTD waiver recipients to Medicaid Managed Care	Prevents transition of TBI/NHTD waiver services to Medicaid Managed Care	
Extend postpartum coverage from 60 days to one year		
Establishes eligibility of individuals being discharged from a nursing home or adult home for Special Income Standard for Housing Expenses which exempts an amount of income for the purpose of assisting with housing costs		
	Removes the requirement for prior authorization for coverage of medication-assisted treatment for opioid addiction	
	Includes language to codify the Independent Consumer Advocacy Network	

**NYSARA Board Member Jim Carr's  
Commentary on COVID Stimulus Plan  
Elmira Star Gazette March 28, 2021**

## **Stimulus plan helps those in need**

I read with much interest the article dated March 22 titled "The local impact of the federal stimulus."

I agree with the mayor of Binghamton when he said, "For capital (uses) the bill (allows for) water projects, sewer projects, broadband projects." Every city and town needs to use the stimulus money to improve their roads, bridges and infrastructure. Not for tax cuts or creating budget surpluses.

This is the most transformative legislation since the New Deal, which should be used as intended to stimulate our local economy.

Resources are being delivered where they are needed to fund jobs and services at the state and local level, because they have had a decade of neglect in the public sector.

The bill encourages investment in our infrastructure and discourages austerity. It includes tax credits for first responders with money going to hard-hit communities that need it most.

The American Rescue Plan, approved by both houses of Congress with no Republican support in the U.S. Senate, and signed into law by President Joe Biden, addresses the health crisis caused by the virus, ensuring access to the vaccine and securing health care resources to adequately respond with the help that's needed.

It also provides support to state, local governments and schools to begin the process of moving back toward reopening and normalcy as public health conditions will allow.

There is also significant direct economic help directly to Americans in need with an additional \$1,400 payment to qualifying individuals, and numerous provisions to help lift the most in need out of poverty while

also assisting with health care coverage and other necessary benefits.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 creates new Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to keep first responders, front-line health workers, teachers and other providers of vital services safely on the jobs as states, local governments, tribes and territories roll out vaccines and fight to rebuild Main Street economies.

## **Candid Perspective on the Partisan Divide in Congress**

Just weeks into the 117th Congress, lawmakers have already had to grapple with a seemingly endless array of national crises. From the Capitol insurrection to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this new Congress has been tested like never before with urgent problems such as exasperated economic inequalities and drastic divisions along party lines that desperately need unified solutions.

Join the Association of Former Members of Congress, the John Brademas Center of New York University, and the Archer Center of the University of Texas System for a conversation with Congressional Chiefs of Staff from both sides of the aisle, who will speak candidly on how they are navigating the new landscape on Capitol Hill.

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

12:00 PM EDT

Virtual Webinar

[https://nyu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_6ZOSll61Ql6vvbo7r9Xe8g](https://nyu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_6ZOSll61Ql6vvbo7r9Xe8g)

## **77 Percent of Americans Support Pensions for All Workers, According to New Research from the National Institute on Retirement Security**

### **Americans See Pensions as Important Tool to Recruit & Retain State and Local Public Employees**

**WASHINGTON, D.C., March 17, 2021** – A new national survey finds that 77 percent of Americans agree that all workers, not just those working for state and local government, should have a pension. And even though the nation is deeply divided on many other issues, support for pensions is consistent across party lines.

Eighty percent of Democrats, 75 percent of Republicans and 78 percent of Independents agree that all workers should have access to a pension.

These findings are contained in a new issue brief from the National Institute on Retirement Security ([NIRS](#)), **Americans' Views of State and Local Employee Retirement Plans.**

"The COVID-19 pandemic has shined a light on the critical role that qualified, experienced state and local workers play in our lives," said [Dan Doonan](#), NIRS executive director and report co-author. "From healthcare workers to first responders to teachers, these employees have worked tirelessly and taken immense risks this past year."

"Our research shows that Americans understand that pensions offer more than retirement security – they are a key workforce tool to help attract and retain employees. State and local governments typically offer lower salaries than the private sector, so retirement and healthcare benefits act as employee magnets," Doonan explained. "We also found interesting that nearly half of Americans say that public sector retirement benefits are about right (46 percent), while about one-third (31 percent) say the benefits are too low."

While the majority of Americans are not on track for a secure retirement, one retirement bright spot is the benefits provided to state and local employees. Most public employees pay into a pension plan that is their primary retirement benefit, which often is supplemented by individual savings and Social Security. Workers with these [three sources](#) of retirement income are best positioned to have a secure retirement.

This research finds that:

- **More than three-fourths of Americans say all workers, not just state and local employees, should have access to a pension.** Some 77 percent say all workers, not just state and local workers, should have a pension. This holds true across party lines. Eighty percent of Democrats, 75 percent of Republicans and 78 percent of Independents agree that all workers should have a pension.
- **The vast majority of respondents agree that providing pensions to state and local employees is a good way to recruit and retain these employees.** Some 75 percent of Americans agree

that pensions are a good way to recruit and retain qualified teachers. With regard to public safety employees, 76 percent agree that pensions are an important recruitment and retention tool of these workers.

- **Most Americans agree that public employees should receive pensions because workers contribute to the cost and these benefits help compensate for lower pay and risks of some jobs.**

Nearly three-fourths (72 percent) agree that state and local employees should receive pensions because they help finance part of the cost by contributing money from each paycheck. Sixty-nine percent say public school teachers deserve a pension to compensate for their lower pay. Similarly, Americans say high risk jobs are another reason that public employees should receive a pension, with 76 percent in agreement.

State and local pensions are funded from three sources: employer contributions, employee contributions and investment earnings. Between 1993 and 2018, about 25 percent of public pension fund receipts came from employer contributions, 11 percent from employee contributions, and about 64 percent from investment earnings. This means that earnings on investments historically have made up the bulk of pension fund receipts, even during two market downturns, and taxpayers are funding only a portion of these benefits.

The vast majority of state and local pensions are well-managed and positioned to weather economic downturns. The [2008 global market crash](#) reduced public pension fund asset values from \$3.15 trillion in 2007 to \$2.17 trillion in 2009. But since then, nearly every state [has enacted meaningful reforms](#) to their pension plans to ensure their long-term sustainability, including benefit reforms and increased employee contributions. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, financial markets have been resilient and most plans remain [on a financially sound course](#). As of the third quarter of 2020, [public pension assets were \\$4.78 trillion, doubling their asset values](#) since 2009.

Pensions are [economically efficient](#) and also provide a sizable [economic impact](#) across the U.S. Retiree spending of public and private sector pension benefits in 2018 generated \$1.3 trillion in total economic output, supporting nearly seven million jobs across the nation. Pension spending also added nearly \$192 billion to government coffers at the federal, state and local levels.



Conducted by Greenwald Research, information for this study was collected from interviews conducted between December 4–10, 2020, of 1,203 individuals aged 25 and older. The final data were weighted by age, gender, and income to reflect the demographics of Americans aged 25 and older. Tabulations in some of the charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

**The National Institute on Retirement Security** is a non-profit, non-partisan organization established to contribute to informed policymaking by fostering a deep understanding of the value of retirement security to employees, employers and the economy as a whole. Located in Washington, D.C., NIRS membership includes financial services firms, employee benefit plans, trade associations, and other retirement service providers.

## **Future of Democracy On The Line**

Sweeping voter suppression legislation enacted in Georgia is front and center in the news this week. It's stark evidence of continuing efforts to undermine American Democracy by making it harder for people to vote. The Georgia legislation even makes it a crime to hand a bottle of water to someone on line waiting to vote.

Hundreds of similar pieces of legislation are being advanced in state legislatures across the country.

Experts at the Nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice say passage of the For The People Act in Congress is now an urgent necessity.

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/policy-solutions/congress-must-pass-people-act>

## **Senior Trump Appointees Remain in Place at Social Security Administration**



The Social Security Administration's main campus  
in Woodlawn, Md.

The chairs of Social Security subcommittees in the House and Senate are calling on President Biden to fire Social Security Administration (SSA) Commissioner **Andrew Saul** and his deputy, **David Black**, immediately. Saul and Black were appointed by former president **Donald Trump** to terms that end in 2025.

There have been several incidents that call into question Saul and Black's leadership.

- In 2020, an SSA [Inspector General](#) report found that the Agency knew that full benefits were not being paid to tens of thousands of Americans but took no action to ensure these beneficiaries received the money they were owed;
- An SSA whistleblower recently came forward saying that Saul and Black were putting illegitimate pressure on SSA judges to wrongfully deny people with disabilities the Social Security benefits they have earned; and
- Stimulus payments for nearly 30 million Social Security beneficiaries have been delayed because the SSA failed to send the IRS the payment information it needed to send stimulus payments until [March 25](#).

“President Biden must protect the people who rely on Social Security from leaders who are not serving the mission of the SSA and the American people,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “We call on him to fire Saul and Black and replace them with appointees who understand, respect and support SSA and the millions of Americans who rely on it for the benefits they have earned.”

## **KHN: Democrats Eye Medicare Negotiations to Lower Drug Prices**

By Emmarie Huetteman, *Kaiser Health News*

Democrats, newly in control of Congress and the White House, are united behind an idea that Republican lawmakers and major drugmakers fiercely oppose: empowering the Department of Health and Human Services to negotiate the prices of brand-name drugs covered by Medicare.

But they do not have enough votes without Republican support in the Senate for the legislation they hope will lower the price consumers pay for prescription drugs. That raises the possibility that Democrats will use a legislative tactic called reconciliation, as they did to pass President Joe Biden’s covid relief package, or even eliminate the Senate filibuster to keep their promise to voters.

Regardless, Democrats hope to authorize Medicare negotiations on payments for at least some of the most expensive brand-name drugs and to base those prices on the drugs’ clinical benefits. Such a measure could put Republicans in the uncomfortable position of opposing an idea that [most voters from both parties generally support](#).

[Click to read more.](#)

## **Calls for Postal Banking Gain Momentum**

The coronavirus pandemic and policies imposed by Congress have weakened the Postal Service’s finances, and a growing number of legislators are pushing to allow the Post Office to provide basic banking services to its customers, an idea the Alliance strongly supports.

The idea of postal banking is not new, in fact the Postal Service provided financial and banking services for more than 50 years, from 1911 until 1966.

Postal banking proponents including Senators **Kirsten Gillibrand** (NY) and **Elizabeth Warren** (MA) say that postal banking would provide revenue to USPS and critical services to millions of Americans who were “unbanked” in 2019, meaning that no one in the household had a checking or savings account. It’s estimated that 12 million Americans in these circumstances turn to predatory payday lenders each year for the financial services they need.

**ACTION NEEDED: Tell Congress to Make Postal Banking a Reality**

“Postal banking is a wonderful idea whose time has come. Let’s help seniors and the USPS at the same time, by sending that message to Congress,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance.