



***NRLN Review*, Summary for December 2019**

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

NRLN President Issued Four Messages

On December 10, an NRLN President's Forum message to point out about Congress that "Talk Is Cheap – Drugs Are Not". There has been talk in Washington, DC about the price of prescription drugs and numerous bills have been introduced in the House and Senate plus proposals by President Trump, but no legislation has been enacted to provide relief to Americans who are paying the highest prices in the world for their medicines.

The so-called Pelosi bill, **H.R. 3, Lower Drug Costs Now Act**, would lower prescription drug costs by empower Medicare to negotiate lower prices, creating a new \$2,000 out-of-pocket limit on prescription drug costs for seniors through Medicare Part D and dental, vision and hearing benefits not currently covered by original Medicare. The bill was passed in the House on December 12.

S. 2543, Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act is the Grassley-Wyden that would cap Medicare beneficiary out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs at \$3,100 per year, beginning in 2022. It would lower the standard copay to 20% from the current 25% and require drug makers to rebate Medicare if they raise prices above the rate of inflation. This bill is supported by President Trump. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (Kentucky) has made no public commitment about whether he will bring the Grassley-Wyden bill to the Senate floor for a vote.

The NRLN is supporting both **H.R. 3** and **S. 2543**. If the Senate passes **S. 2543** it would go to a conference committee with **H.R. 3**. The NRLN hopes this would result in a compromise bill that the President would sign into law.

On December 18, NRLN President Bill Kadereit issued his Christmas message stating, "I hope your Christmas season includes family and friends. If you will observe a quiet holiday, may you recall favorite memories of past Christmases. Be safe if travel is on your schedule. If your religion or custom is to celebrate in a different way, may you enjoy the traditions meaningful to you."

On December 19, the NRLN President's Forum message reported on the announcement that President Trump made the previous day that a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM), if finalized, would allow for the importation of certain prescription drugs from Canada. In addition, the Administration is providing draft guidance on how manufacturers could import drugs originally intended for sale in another country that are manufactured in accordance with the FDA-approved application.

For several years, NRLN has been lobbying for the importation of safe and lower-priced prescription drugs from Canada and other countries that meet the FDA's safety standards.

On December 23, NRLN President Bill Kadereit issued a Forum message to inform NRLN members that a bill supported by the NRLN, the Setting Every Community up for Retirement Enhancement Act of 2019, referred to as the SECURE Act, was enacted on December 20 as part of the \$1.4 trillion fiscal year 2020 appropriations bill. The SECURE Act represents the first major retirement legislation since the Pension Protection Act of 2006, also supported by the NRLN.

NRLN letters were sent on July 8, 2019 to Senators Chuck Grassley (IA), Chairman, and Ron Wyden (OR), Ranking Member, urging a vote in the Committee on Finance on the SECURE ACT. The letters pointed out that the NRLN supported the SECURE Act because too many American workers are reaching retirement age without the savings they need. Enacting the SECURE Act would go a long way towards addressing the retirement crisis by helping American workers save for retirement by making it easier for small businesses to offer retirement plans to their employees.

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 December 9 conference call.

H.R.2777/S.1936 -- Protecting Access to Lifesaving Screenings Act of 2019

H.R.4386/S.2496 -- Stop the Wait Act

H.R.3 -- Lower Drug Costs Now Act Of 2019

The LAC also reviewed and then tabled and will monitor the following bills:

H.R.2787 -- CPI for Seniors Act of 2019

H.R.1393/S.1423 -- Medicare (and Medicaid) Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act of 2019

Alyson Parker, NRLN Executive Director, was asked to obtain additional information about **H.R.2777/S.1936** and recommend whether it should merit an NRLN Action Alert in early January 2020 or NRLN letters sent to the Chairmen and Ranking members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Health and the Senate Committee on Finance.

The LAPC decided to "support" **H.R.3 -- Lower Drug Costs Now Act Of 2019**. The NRLN is supporting both **H.R. 3** (passed in the House on December 112) and **S. 2543, Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act**, the Grassley-Wyden bill. The NRLN hopes both bills will pass in the House and Senate and go to a conference committee that will result in a compromise bill that the President would sign.

On December 10, letters requesting committees vote on **H.R.4386/S.2496 -- Stop the Wait Act** were emailed to House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal (MA-01) and Ranking Member Kevin Brady (TX-08); House Committee on Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone (NJ-06) and Ranking Member Greg Walden (OR-02); House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Pete DeFazio (OR-04) and Ranking Member Sam Graves (MO-04).

The LAPC accepted the LAC's decision to table and monitor:

H.R.2787 -- CPI for Seniors Act of 2019

H.R.1393/S.1423 -- Medicare (and Medicaid) Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act of 2019

Click here to review the above NRLN supported bills posted on the Bills webpage.

<https://www.nrln.org/congresslegs.html#/bills> Click here to read letters posted in Letters to Washington.

<https://www.nrln.org/archives2.html#ltrswash>

AREF Annual Appeal Letter Mailed

On December 18, the annual appeal letter was mailed requesting support for the American Retirees Education Foundation (AREF), the research and education arm of the NRLN. The letter noted that without AREF's

research and whitepapers the NRLN would not be able to remain proactive in lobbying for retirees. Identified in the letter were actions taken by the AREF in 2019.

Click here to read the AREF appeal letter. <http://www.seniorsaref.org/> The AREF is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. Click here to make an online tax- deductible donation to the AREF. <https://www.nrln.org/ccdirect.htm>

New Postings on NRLN Chapter Webpages

Webpages for DuPont Retirees Chapter, General Motors Retirees Chapter, and TVA Retirees Chapter have December articles on the retirees' former employers. To access the webpages, go to www.nrln.org, click on the black tab for NRLN Chapters and select the name of the Chapter.

Links to Key News Articles Posted in December

During December, 115 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. Here are examples of the headlines at www.nrln.org

Concerned with health costs? Take this 5-day health challenge – Dec. 1

3 Ways You Can Lose Your Social Security Benefits – Dec. 3

Proposed bill would expand access to retirement plans to part-time workers – Dec. 3

Experts split sharply over experimental Alzheimer's drug – Dec 5

Opinion: Want to make people upset? Talk about Social Security's cost of living adjustment – Dec. 6

Medicare Advantage rebates to hit new highs in 2020 – Dec. 6

Key House and Senate health leaders reach deal to stop surprise medical bills – Dec 8

Millions of Americans aren't receiving Social Security statements in the mail. A new bill aims to change that – Dec. 9

Opinion: Expect A Little Better Service From Social Security Soon – Dec. 10

'It's really over': Corporate pensions head for extinction as nature of retirement plans changes – Dec. 10

Bill requiring annual Social Security earnings statements passes House committee – Dec. 11

Opinion: The Future Of Medicare? The Head Of CMS Offers Some Critical Answers – Dec. 11

Medicare would cover dental, vision — if Senate OKs House bill – Dec. 12

U.S. watchdog finds \$6.7 billion in questionable Medicare payments to insurers – Dec. 12

Inspector General's Report Raises Red Flags Over Billions In Medicare Advantage Payments To Private Insurers – Dec. 13

Democrats Pass Sweeping Drug Legislation As Political Salvo Heading Into 2020 – Dec. 13

Declining numbers of Americans have a primary care provider – Dec. 16

House OKs spending bill with SECURE Act attached – Dec 17

Trump Administration Unveils Drafts To Create Dual Pathways Easing Way For Prescription Drug Importation – Dec. 18

Senate approves spending package with SECURE Act attached – Dec. 19