

NRLN Review – July 2019

First *NRLN Review* Provides Summary of July Actions

This is the first issue of the *NRLN Review* that will provide a monthly report on National Retiree Legislative Network actions, events in Congress and important retirement news.

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 (LAC) to consider for action during its July 1 conference call.

- H.R.860/S.269, H.R.1170/S.478, H.R.3202/S.1132 -- Social Security bills
- H.R.2178/S.1374 -- Metastatic Breast Cancer Access to Care Act
- H.R.1034/S.640 -- PHAIR Pricing Act of 2019
- H.R.1948/S.518 -- Lymphedema Act of 2019
- H.R.1994 -- Setting Every Community Up for the Retirement Enhancement Act of 2019
- H.R.2693/S.283 -- Increasing Access to Osteoporosis Testing for Medicare Beneficiaries Act of 2019
- H.R.2770/S.1476 -- Huntington's Disease Parity Act

The LAPC composed of Bill Kadereit, Chairman, Alyson Parker, Judy Stenberg, Bob Martina and Ed Beltram made the following decisions.

- Support H.R. 860/S.269, Social Security 2100 Act. An NRLN Action Alert will be issued in early September when members of Congress return to Washington, DC following the August recess.
- Because the LAPC decided to support H.R. 860/S.269, H.R.1170/S.478, Social Security Expansion Act, and H.R.2302/S.1132, Protecting and Preserving Social Security Act, are considered to be of less importance.
- H.R.2178/S.1374, Metastatic Breast Cancer Access to Care Act: Action Alert issued on July 8 requesting that NRLN members email letters to their Representative and Senators to urge passage of the bills that would waive the 5-month waiting period for Social Security Disability Insurance and the 24-month waiting period for eligible Medicare benefits for patients with Metastatic Breast Cancer. If you have not responded to the Action Alert, go to: www.nrln.org/SE.html#.
- Letters from NRLN President Bill Kadereit were emailed on July 8 to Senate Committee on Finance Chairman Chuck Grassley (IA) and Ranking Member Ron Wyden (OR) requesting Committee votes on S.283, S.518, S.640, S.1476, H.R.1994.
- Letters from Kadereit were emailed on July 8 to House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal (MA-01) and Ranking Member Kevin Brady (TX-08) requesting Committee votes on H.R.2693, H.R.2770.
- Letters from Kadereit were emailed on July 8 to House Committee on Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone (NJ-06) and Ranking Member Greg Walden (OR-02) requesting Committee vote on H.R.2693.
- Letters from Kadereit were email on July 8 to House Subcommittee of Health Chairwoman Anna Eshoo (CA-18) and Ranking Member Michael Burgess (TX-26) requesting Subcommittee votes on H.R.1034, H.R.1948.

Bills and Letters Posted on NRLN Website

The bills the LAPC decided to support can be accessed at: www.nrln.org/SE.html/congresslegs.html#/bills. The list of bills feeds data for the **NRLN's report card** that shows whether members of a state's Congressional

delegation are cosponsors of bills supported by the NRLN. To see the report card for your state, go to: www.nrln.org/SE.html/congresslegs.html#/legislators. Click on your state on the USA map. When the webpage showing your state's U.S. Senators and Representatives appears, click on "EXCEL DOWNLOAD". After downloading, click on "Enable Editing" in the upper right of the EXCEL window to view the information correctly.

Kadereit's letters to the House and Senate leaders can be read in the "Letters to Washington" section of NRLN website Archives at: www.nrln.org/archives2.html#ltrswash.

Two NRLN President's Forum Messages Issued

On July 11, an NRLN President's Forum message was issued on **Studies on Rx Prices and Congressional Gridlock**. It reported on recently released study showing how much prescription drug prices are increasing in the USA and how much more Americans are paying on average than in comparison countries. The study by Scripps Research Translational Institute from 2012 to 2017, focused on a total of 49 brand-name drugs, found the median cost of the drugs increased 76 percent during the six-year period. Meanwhile, Congress is in partisan politics gridlock on legislation to make medicines more affordable.

The July 24 NRLN President's Forum, **Insurers Overcharge Government for Medicare Plans**, provided information on a Kaiser Health News report that The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) officials have known for years that some Medicare Advantage (MA) plans overbill the government by exaggerating how sick their patients are or by charging Medicare for treating serious medical conditions they cannot prove their patients have. CMS is proposing a series of enhanced audits tailored to claw back \$1 billion in MA overpayments by 2020 - just a tenth of what it estimates the plans overcharge the government in a given year. Reportedly, private health insurance companies who provide MA plans have overcharged Medicare by nearly \$30 billion the past three years alone.

NRLN President's Forum messages are email to all NRLN grassroots advocates who have email addresses in the NRLN's database and posted on www.nrln.org and www.facebook.com/nrln1. A message to read the Forum is sent to followers on www.tweeter.com/nrln3 and www.instagram.com/photosnrlnorg.

If you missed reading the NRLN President's Forum messages, the July 11 message is available in NRLN Archives at: www.nrln.org/archives.htm#pres. The July 24 message is still posted on the NRLN website home page at: www.nrln.org.

NRLN Facebook Messages

Three messages were posted on www.facebook.com/nrln1 during July. **NRLN ACTION ALERT – CONGRESS SHOULD WAIVE BENEFITS WAITING PERIOD FOR METASTATIC BREAST CANCER PATIENTS** was posted on July 8. **STUDIES ON RX PRICES AND CONGRESSIONAL GRIDLOCK** was posted on July 11. **INSURERS OVERCHARGE GOVERNMENT FOR MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLANS** was posted on July 24. The NRLN Facebook page has 5,683 "Followers" that receive NRLN messages on their personal Facebook news feeds. Go to www.facebook.com/nrln1 and click "Follow" to become a "Follower" of NRLN messages.

There are times when the NRLN will "Boost" a Facebook message. This means the NRLN pays a fee to Facebook to distribute the message for a certain number of days (usually about a week) to Facebook users age 50 and older across the nation. Here are three examples of the number of seniors reached with a "Boost":

- **January 8, 2019, NRLN message – *Fix the Social Security Tax Burden: Reached 77,059 seniors and had 11,181 "Engagements"*. (Engagements are when people perform actions, such as, "Like" a post, click on a link or write a comment.)**
- **May 4, 2019, NRLN President's Forum – *Social Security and Medicare Funds Rapidly Depleting: Reached 149,699 seniors and had 6,756 "Engagements"*.**
- **June 5, 2019, NRLN Action Alert – *Urge Congress to Pass Improving HOPE for Alzheimer's Act: Reached 41,851 seniors and had 5,128 "Engagements"*.**

Summer Newsletters Available to Read

NRLN grassroots advocates were notified on July 23 that the summer newsletter was available to read at: www.nrln.org/focus%20newsletter_files/NRLN%20FOCUS%202019%20Summer.pdf. The newsletter includes a column by NRLN President Bill Kadereit on NRLN activities; a column by NRLN Executive Director Alyson Parker on the need to fix Social Security, and an article on the next NRLN Fly-in dates to Washington, DC on September 23-25, 2019 and February 24-26, 2020. Also announced on July 23 was the posting of the General Motors Retirees Chapter newsletter on the Chapter's webpage with a message from GMRC President Larry Hice at: www.nrln.org/CHAPTERS/GMRC/NRLN%20FOCUS%202019%20Summer%20GMRC.pdf.

NRLN members who make an annual contribution to the NRLN and GMRC and do not have an email address will receive their copies of the newsletters in the U.S. Mail.

NRLN Chapters Revise and Update Webpages

Members of the NRLN Villages Chapter were sent an email on July 23 to invite them to visit the revised NRLN Villages Chapter Webpage at: www.nrln.org/CHAPTERS/VILLAGES/villchapter.html. The webpage now features a **Report Card** that discloses whether Representative Daniel Webster (FL-11), Senator Marco Rubio and Senator Rick Scott are co-sponsors of bills that the NRLN supports. Another new section shows the "coming soon" of the NRLN Villages Chapter **Speakers Bureau**. The **News Articles for The Villages Members** are updated most days.

The Chapter webpages for Arizona, New Mexico, Washington, Oregon and Utah received updates during July.

Three NRLN Region Directors Send Messages

NRLN Region Directors Paul Bayliss (Region 1-New England), Chris Dyrda (Region 4-Southeast) and Terry Yates (Florida) sent emails in July to grassroots advocates on How You Can Initiate Action with Your Members of Congress. Bob Martina, NRLN Vice President – Grassroots, co-signed each message.

Links to News Articles Posted in July

During July, 85 ([more to be added by July 31](#)) links to news articles related to retirement issues were researched and posted daily IN THE NEWS on the NRLN website home page at www.nrln.org. Here are examples of the headlines:

Nancy Pelosi's latest Medicare proposal would pass drug discounts to all consumers – July 1
Generics more expensive than branded drugs on Part D, study says – July 3
Trump Plans Executive Order To Lower Drug Prices – July 5
Congress has ambitious agenda tackling health care costs – July 7
Opinion: Taxing Inheritances Won't Fix Social Security – July 9
Grassley: Deal to lower drug prices moving forward 'very soon' – July 11
Medicare is rapidly running out of money: Alex Azar – July 11
Medicare Must Keep A Closer Eye On Hospices And Nursing Homes That Put Patients At Risk – July 12
These pension plans are at risk of going broke. Now lawmakers need to agree on a fix – July 12
Why Is Healthcare So Expensive for Retirees? – July 13
Did Your Health Plan Deny You Care? Fight Back. – July 15
Insurers Running Medicare Advantage Plans Overbill Taxpayers By Billions As Feds Struggle To Stop It – July 16
Democratic chair: Medicare negotiating drug prices not moving before August – July 16
As pensions fail, Congress ponders, and career savings evaporate – July 20
Pelosi aide: Major bill to lower drug prices coming in September – July 22
Grassley gambles on drug price bill despite GOP doubts – July 23
Today's Congressional Hearing Is A Huge Milestone In The Fight To Expand Social Security – July 24
No bipartisan consensus on shoring up Social Security – July 25

Trump Cooking Up A Sweeping Executive Order That Would Cut Drug Prices In Medicare's Part D Program, Sources Say – July 25

Drug cost bill advances but GOP resistance spells trouble – July 25

Senate Finance's Sweeping Drug Prices Bill Moves Forward But It Has A Bumpy Path In Front Of It – July 26

5 Social Security Changes in 2020 That Could Affect Your Take-Home Income – July 28