

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Incumbents Lose in WV, Utah as Voters Head to the Polls in Four More States

Rep. **Alan Mollohan** (D-WV) lost his bid for a 15th term Tuesday in a primary defeat. He is the first House member to lose a reelection bid in the 2010 campaign, and his defeat comes just days after Sen. **Robert Bennett** (R-UT) was knocked off the November ballot in Utah's convention process. Mollohan had a 98% lifetime score with the Alliance, including 100% in 2009. Bennett had a 5% lifetime voting record with the Alliance, and he scored 0% with the Alliance in 2009.

This coming Tuesday, May 18, ranks as the most important of the election calendar so far, according to the publication *Politico*. Although only four states - Arkansas, Kentucky, Oregon and Pennsylvania - will go to the polls that day, "the ballot will be packed with marquee elections that will provide the broadest and most detailed data to date about the toxicity of the political environment and the intensity of anti-establishment fury." Two incumbent Democratic senators are in tough primary battles: **Blanche Lincoln** of Arkansas and **Arlen Specter** of Pennsylvania. Lieutenant Governor **Bill Halter** is challenging Sen. Lincoln for the Democratic nomination, while **Rep. Joe Sestak** is challenging Sen. Specter. In Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District, **Mark Critz** (D) is taking on **Tim Burns** (R) in a bid to replace Rep. **John Murtha** (D), who died in February. In Kentucky, Lieutenant Governor **Daniel Mongiardo** and Attorney General **Jack Conway** are in a very close race for the Democratic nomination for Senate. Kentucky will also be the scene of a Republican Senate primary between tea party-backed candidate **Rand Paul** and GOP establishment favorite **Trey Grayson**. Four days later, on May 22, a closely watched special election will be held in Hawaii's first Congressional District.

Seniors Bill of Rights

Last week, the House Democratic Caucus launched the Seniors Task Force to engage American seniors on issues relevant to them [<http://www.dems.gov/seniors>]. Co-chaired by Congresswomen **Jan Schakowsky** (D-IL) and **Doris Matsui** (D-CA), the caucus introduced H. Res. 1342, a Seniors Bill of Rights. The legislation addresses Democratic support for senior priorities including: protection from scams and fraud; affordable health care; safe and livable communities; and economic security [<http://www.dems.gov/seniors/bill-of-rights>]. "With seniors living longer, it is a relief to see our government paying attention to the needs of the growing retiree population," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

Fiscal Commission Meets Again on May 26

The next full meeting of the President's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform will be on May 26, 2010. The Commission is considering possible cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid to address the nation's deficit. Alliance members have now sent more than 4,200 letters to their elected officials demanding that the Commission's meetings be held out

in the open. An official notice about the meetings states that they will be “open to the public,” with the caveat that seating “will be limited by the space available.”

“These discussions are important, because everything is on the table, including Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid cuts,” said **Edward F. Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “While the meetings will not offer the precise type of transparency and engagement we are looking for – there is still the issue of the working group meetings being held behind closed doors – the openness wording is a baby step in the right direction,” he added. To see the Alliance’s key documents regarding the Commission, go to <http://bit.ly/bHWH6q>.

Greece Enacts Harsh Social Security Cuts

Greece’s national debt crisis brought sweeping social security changes this week. Greek retirees are facing pension cuts of 14%, and all retirees face a benefits freeze for three years. The government has also raised the retirement age of women to meet that of men and raised the early retirement age to 60, with smaller pensions. In addition, the government is indexing pensions to life expectancy, meaning reduced monthly checks [<http://bit.ly/du1oXp>]. There is discussion among politicians, the media and the public about what this means for the United States. Extreme national debt makes most Americans very uncomfortable. Conservatives like **Paul Ryan** (R-WI) are using the current situation to say that the U.S. is “seeing the failure of European socialism and social welfare states.”

“Surely, some changes need to be made in our economic policy – taxing, spending – and it will be a matter of priorities. Retirees currently receive modest benefits from Social Security averaging just over \$1,000 per month,” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. **Lawrence Mishel**, president of the Economic Policy Institute said, “If we reduce Social Security benefits, we exacerbate a growing problem: What are we going do about retirement in this country?” Talk of adjusting or cutting Social Security and Medicare does not pair well with the fact that about 39% of Americans are not saving at all for retirement and the majority is not saving enough: <http://bit.ly/dkbNte>, <http://bit.ly/cXJj13>.

New on the Alliance Web Site

Two new documents on the Alliance web site pertain to health care reform. For a fact sheet on “Long Term Care in the New Health Law,” go to <http://bit.ly/c3QIJs>; to learn about health care benefits for early retirees, go to <http://bit.ly/ahSdQY>. For the latest fact sheet on Social Security, go to <http://bit.ly/9Aj09D>.

Retirees with the Write Stuff: Write Letter, Win Pen

“Retirees with the Write Stuff” is a project recognizing retirees whose letters to the editor are published. Most recently, **Barbara DeVane**, **Linda Linderman**, **Donna McGrath**, **Lee Pound** and **Mark Smith** contributed to their state and local papers. If you have had a letter published recently, please email us at letters@retiredamericans.org so that we can recognize you and send you a “Write Stuff” pen.