



## ORGANIZING TOOLKIT



# The Super Committee Toolkit

**Your Organizing Guide on How to Protect  
*Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid*  
October ~ December 2011**

**Includes:**

Event Ideas & Strategies

Talking Points

Sample Op-ed & Media Advisory

Tips for Using Social Media

And More!





President  
**Barbara J. Easterling**

Secretary-Treasurer  
**Ruben Burks**



October 2011

Dear Alliance Leader:

The next two months are critical for the programs we most care about. The new congressional Super Committee is in the midst of deliberations that could affect the future of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for decades. We need to be as active as possible in as many ways as possible to let Congress, the Administration, and the public know that these programs did not create the nation's fiscal situation. Retirees rely on these programs more than ever and cutting them in the name of deficit reduction is simply wrong.

This toolkit contains information, strategies, and ideas on how we can tell our elected officials and the public that America's seniors are watching and engaging themselves in the current debate. Time is short. The Super Committee must present recommendations by November 23. Congress must vote on them by December 23. In addition, Congress must vote on a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which could force automatic cuts to our core programs, by the end of the year.

If you need assistance in setting up lobbying visits during the Fall and Winter congressional recess, please contact Rich Fiesta, Government Affairs Director, at 202-637-5271. If you need assistance developing earned media events and activities, please contact Dani Pere, Field Director, at 202-637-5351. And if you need help promoting your events and activities to the media, utilizing social media, or setting up and Editorial Board meeting, please contact Michael Buckley, Communications Director, at 202-637-5190. We are here to help!

Thank you for your continued activism. Let's show America that the Alliance for Retired Americans will be the force and voice for America's seniors.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Edward F. Coyle".

Edward F. Coyle  
Executive Director







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## Alliance for Retired Americans Field Campaign The Super Committee Strategy September – December, 2011

### BACKGROUND

On August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011, President Obama signed the Budget Control Act of 2011 in law. The BCA established the **Super Committee** (or formally known as the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction) a bipartisan Congressional committee charged with identifying at least another \$1.5 trillion in deficit reduction that could include Social Security cuts, as well as Medicare and Medicaid cuts. This Super Committee of 12 lawmakers, appointed equally by the Democratic and Republican leaders of the U.S. House and U.S. Senate, will report to Congress by November 23, 2011. If a majority of its members reach agreement on all or a portion of a \$1.5 trillion deficit-reduction plan, it will get an up-or-down majority vote by December 23, 2011. There can be no amendments or Senate filibuster. The committee can consider cuts to any program and also whether to raise revenues.

\$1.2 trillion in automatic **cuts would be triggered if:** (1) the Super Committee fails to put forward , (2) if they produce a plan that is not approved by Congress, or (3) or if a proposal is enacted by January 15<sup>th</sup> 2012 but saves less than \$1.2 trillion over 10 years. . If gridlock occurs and no Super Committee plan is passed, Social Security and Medicaid would be exempted from the automatic trigger. Automatic cuts would be divided equally between defense and non-defense programs. Social Security, Medicaid, unemployment insurance, and other programs for low-income families would be exempted from these cuts. Automatic cuts to non-defense programs would include a cut of up to 2 percent of the amount that would be paid to Medicare providers and insurance plans each year between 2013 and 2021. There would be no cuts to benefits

### STRATEGIC GOALS:

The Alliance will utilize the creation and work of the Super Committee and the mandatory vote on the Balanced Budget Amendment during the fall and winter to continue to define sides in the budget debate by creating an accountability environment on who supports seniors and who wants to destroy Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

1. Push a primary and secondary narrative on defending our core programs:
  - a. Primary - challenge the current deficit narrative, and define them as seeking to destroy Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid. Seniors are already hurting, and even modest cuts to these programs would be devastating!
  - b. Secondary – complementary proactive narrative that seeks to offer sound bite policy solutions without going to substantive policy. This can be utilized in more proactive events with Congressional champions. Example: “Scrap the cap”

The Alliance will also strategically partner with the AFL-CIO’s “America Wants to Work” Campaign to promote how the budget and policies we are advocating and mobilizing around are fully integrated with Labor’s jobs campaign; it is not one at the expense of the other.



## **THEME:**

SOS: Save Our Seniors! Don't let politicians in Washington drive seniors into poverty. It's un-American and just plain wrong.

## **CORE MESSAGES:**

**Social Security or Poverty?** Without their monthly Social Security check, 44% of American seniors would fall below the poverty line. Even now, the average retired worker scrapes by on \$1,174 a month, and a third of all senior retirees have Social Security as their only source of income. How many seniors already have to choose between food and being homeless? How much more money will politicians steal from Social Security, and how many more seniors are we willing to kick into the streets?

**Say No to Sick Seniors! Say No to Health Care Insecurity!** Before Medicare, roughly half of all American seniors had no health insurance at all. With health costs skyrocketing, how will seniors afford healthcare if their Medicare benefits are cut?

**No Medicaid = No Long-Term Care.** Forty percent of Americans who reach the age of 65 will need more than two years of long term care, while 200 million American adults lack long term care insurance. Medicaid is the ONLY Federal program that supports long-term care for seniors. Where do seniors go when their Medicaid no longer covers the costs of their long-term care facility?

**No income? No health care? No housing? NO WAY!**

## **GOALS OF WORK**

1. Block any Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid cuts by the Super Committee (on Social Security, block chained CPI and payroll tax cut for employers and employees)
2. Discredit the idea of a COLA cut (chained CPI) for this and future debates about Social Security
3. Discredit the idea that the current coverage levels of Medicare and Medicaid are sufficient to meet seniors (especially low-income) needs
4. Significantly increase media coverage promoting the idea that Social Security does not contribute to the deficit and it should be dealt with on a separate track
5. Significantly increase media coverage promoting the idea that Medicare and Medicaid are base level safety nets that allow an avenue for seniors to live with dignity and some level of economic security.

## **KEY SET DATES TO ORGANIZE AROUND**

1. October 14<sup>th</sup>: Congressional committees make recommendations (if any) to Super Committee
2. October 17<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>: House Recess
3. October 24<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>: Senate Recess
4. October: 2012 Social Security COLA & 2012 Medicare premiums announced
5. November 7<sup>th</sup> – November 13<sup>th</sup>: House Recess
6. November 21-27<sup>th</sup>: House Recess
7. November. 23: Super Committee plan due to be reported or not
8. Dec. 2: Super Committee transmits recommendations to Congress and the President
9. Dec. 9: House committees to report recommendations to the floor
10. Dec. 23: Super Committee plan must pass both chambers if it exists



## TARGETS

1. The Obama Administration
2. Super Committee in Alliance chartered / soon to be chartered states (*\* indicate staffed states*)
  - a. \*Murray (WA)
  - b. \*Becerra (CA)
  - c. Clyburn (SC)
  - d. Van Hollen (MD)
  - e. Upton and Camp (MI)
  - f. \*Kyl (AZ)
  - g. \*Toomey (PA)
  - h. \*Portman (OH)
  - i. Hensarling (TX)Senate leadership
3. House Leadership
4. Members of Congress at large
5. Vulnerable Senate 2012 Senate candidates to keep pressure on Senate leaders:

## MENU of KEY FIELD ACTIONS

1. **Petition / Post Card Collection** – State Alliance’s utilize at all events to collect names
2. **Petition / Post Card Delivery** and Press Conference to Targeted MOC
3. **Literature Drop and/or Educational Presentation on** Super Committee Targeting Persuadable Voters
4. Hold “**Tent City**” Earned Media Actions
  - a. The goal is to show the prospect of seniors living on the streets. Set up a small number of tents, have up facts and figures, perhaps have speakers saying that this is the future seniors face if Congress keeps cutting budget deals on the backs of seniors. Highlights how many seniors are already there, or close to it.
5. **National Call In Day** and/or Rolling State Call in Days
6. Work with Social Security Works to **release state / CD combined Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid reports** in Super Committee (potentially other) states. (*SSW would produce report – will utilize new Census Bureau data to show how many seniors are in poverty*)
7. **Lobbying**
  - a. In state lobby meetings with Super Committee Democrats with key educational focus on the entitlement programs
  - b. Lobby vulnerable Senate 2012 incumbents to play an active role
  - c. Lobby broader Senate and House membership
  - d. Mail Alliance educational letters to MOC’s on a regular basis
8. Meet with **Editorial Boards** to pitch our core messaging on the Super Committee



## **TIMELINE FOR FIELD ACTIONS:**

### **September**

1. Collect petitions and post cards; develop instate strategy on how to disburse and collect them (National Alliance will develop on-line component)
2. Set appointments to meet with local Editorial Boards
3. Set Lobby appointments during House and Senate recess
4. Utilize Social Media to interview and post compelling stories State Alliance members on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Share with MOC and media. (National Alliance will assist in promoting the most compelling of stories to national media outlets)

### **October:**

1. Lobby specific MOC's that sit on committees that will be making recommendations to the Super Committee with a focus on the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Senate Finance Committee (October 14<sup>th</sup>)
  - a. If recommendations are made, utilize media to react with either positive or negative responses
2. Continue to collect petitions and post cards
3. First part of October, release SSW Social Security report
4. Utilize Halloween to hold a thematic event
5. Possible tent cities earned media events
6. Possible editorial board meetings

### **November**

1. Prior to the 23<sup>rd</sup>: Earned media event with presentation of petitions and post cards
2. Possible tent cities earned media events
3. Literature Drops on Super Committee proposals targeting larger senior community
4. Possible editorial meetings
5. State / National Alliance ready to respond on potential release November 23<sup>rd</sup> plan

### **December**

1. If Super Committee transmits plan to Congress utilize media to react:
  - a. If proposed plans cut Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid, respond with concern to the media and continue outreach to Members of Congress to vote NO on the Super Committee plan
2. National call in days
3. Lobbying
4. Holiday themed card delivery



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### FULL SUPER COMMITTEE LIST:

1. **Sen. Patty Murray** (D-WA) - co-chair; Senate Democratic Conference Secretary; member on Budget, Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) and Appropriations Committees
2. **Sen. Max Baucus** (D-MT) – Chair of Finance Committee; former member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
3. **Sen. John Kerry** (D-MA) - member of Finance Committee
4. **Sen. Jon Kyl** (R-AZ) – Senate Minority Whip; member of Finance Committee
5. **Sen. Pat Toomey** (R-PA) – member of Budget Committee
6. **Sen. Rob Portman** (R-OH) – member of Budget Committee
7. **Rep. Jeb Hensarling** (R- TX) - co-chair; Chairman of the House Republican Conference; former member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
8. **Rep. Dave Camp** (R- MI) – Chair of Ways and Means Committee; former member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
9. **Rep. Fred Upton** (R-MI) – Chair of Energy and Commerce Committee; former member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
10. **Rep. James E. Clyburn** (D-SC) – Assistant Democratic Leader
11. **Rep. Xavier Becerra** (D-CA) – member of Ways and Means Committee; former member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
12. **Rep. Chris Van Hollen** (D-MD) - Ranking Member of Budget Committee



## IN DEPTH SUPER COMMITTEE & BUDGET TIMETABLE FOR 2011-2013

<b>August 2011</b>	<p><i>August 4</i> – Debt ceiling raised \$400 billion (out of the \$900 billion in first portion of the debt ceiling increase).</p> <p><i>August 16</i> – Deadline to appoint super committee members.</p>
<b>Sept 2011</b>	<p><i>Sept 16</i> – Deadline for super committee to hold its first meeting (agenda must be given 48 hours in advance of meeting; any hearings must have 7 days advance notice). There is no specification on number of meetings.</p> <p><i>Sept 30</i> – Last day of FY2011: current CR expires.</p>
<b>October 2011</b>	<p><i>Oct. 1</i> – FY12 begins.</p> <p><i>Oct 14</i> – Deadline for House and Senate committees to submit recommendations to super committee, if they choose to do so.</p>
<b>November 2011</b>	<p><i>Nov 23</i> – Deadline for super committee to vote on plan with at least \$1.5 trillion in savings (CBO estimates must be available at least 48 hours before vote).</p>
<b>December 2011</b>	<p><i>Dec 2</i> – If super committee approves plan, deadline to submit report and legislative language to President and Congress.</p> <p><i>Dec. 9</i> – If legislation is approved by the super committee, each committee receiving a referral of the super committee bill must report that bill without amendment by this deadline.</p> <p><i>Dec. 23</i> – Deadline for House and Senate votes on super committee plan.</p> <p><i>Dec. 31</i> – Deadline for House and Senate to vote on a balanced budget amendment to the constitution (cannot vote sooner than Oct.1).</p> <p><b>Expiring at end of year:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Federal Emergency unemployment insurance extension</li> <li>- Payroll tax cut</li> <li>- Tax extenders (<i>does not include '01 &amp; '03 tax cuts and '09 ARRA improvements to tax credits which were extended until end of 2012</i>)</li> <li>- SGR Medicare Physician's Payments Fix</li> </ul>
<b>January 2012</b>	<p><i>Jan 1</i> – If Congress has not passed a joint resolution of disapproval, Secretary of Treasury is authorized to raise the debt limit by an additional \$500 billion (i.e., the remainder of \$900 billion in first portion of debt ceiling increase).</p> <p><i>Jan 15</i> – If super committee's plan fails, or falls short of \$1.2 trillion in savings, sequestration would be triggered and start in 2013. Any agreed upon deficit savings from the super committee would be credited against the \$1.2 trillion sequestration, i.e. across the board cuts in non-exempt programs.</p> <p>The president's third and final debt-increase is likely to come sometime in early 2012. (The request could be \$1.2 trillion without Congress taking any other action. If Congress submits a balanced budget constitutional amendment to the states, that request could be \$1.5 trillion. If, as a result of the joint committee's work, the president signs a bill reducing the deficit by at least \$1.2 trillion, he could increase the debt ceiling by an amount equal to those savings, but no more than \$1.5 trillion.)</p>





## Event Check List

### BEFORE:

- Plan ahead! At least two weeks in advance, plan what kind of event you want to hold and who you want to speak. There are examples of events in this toolkit.
- If your Member of Congress supports protecting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, plan to have a positive event inviting them to attend.
- If your Member of Congress supports cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, host an accountability event in front of his/her office.
- Fill out a PRE EVENT FORM and email to [ARAORGANIZING@retiredamericans.org](mailto:ARAORGANIZING@retiredamericans.org). We will use this event form to assist you with your field needs.**
- If you are having an accountability event, map the area in front of the Congressional office. Remember, you can't block the entrance or driveways. It helps to draw a map and plan where speakers and participants will stand.
- Draft an agenda for your event. See sample in this toolkit.
- Help prepare each speaker's remarks to be sure everyone is on message.
- Map your community. For example, which organizations might have members to fill the speaking roles. Or, which organizations have a large membership to turn out for crowd building. As this event has a theatric portion, are there local artists that would enjoy participating?
- Reach out to your local members ask them to participate. Ask your State AFL-CIO, local Central Labor Councils, and participating Labor Unions to participate
- Send an email invitation about a week before the event. See sample email in this toolkit.
- Make and post flyers in high traffic areas around town (libraries, malls, coffee shops, senior centers, community centers). See sample flyer in this toolkit.
- Make reminder phone calls and send a reminder email the night before the event.
- Create and print sign-in sheets to use at the event. See sample in this toolkit.
- Put together an event team with the following captains: greeter, sign-in, story collector, and clean-up.
- Recruit a volunteer to video the event.
- Designate a media point person to handle media outreach.
- Create a list of media contacts from local papers (dailies and weeklies), television stations (producers), radio stations, and bloggers.
- Send a media advisory two or three days before the event and have a press release ready to send the day of the event. See the sample media advisory and press release in this toolkit.



### **DAY OF:**

- Send the press release first thing in the morning. See media section of this toolkit for more info.
- Arrive at the venue an hour early to set up.
- Have your volunteers in place with materials thirty minutes before event start time.
- Have every guest sign-in; try to get email addresses and phone numbers.
- Make sure speakers are ready to go at their given time.
- Have one volunteer collect stories on a flipcam
- After event, please submit a post event report form

### **MATERIALS CHECKLIST:**

- Sign-in sheets
- Markers, Pens
- Contact list for volunteers
- Speakers List with contact information
- Agenda
- Bullhorn
- Podium
- Rally Signs
- Stickers
- Flipcam / Camera / Video Camera
- Media Sign-in Sheet
- Alliance Fact Sheets and Issue Briefs
- Birthday Card (Alliance provided)



# AT-A-GLANCE FIELD MOBILIZATION PRE-EVENT NOTIFICATION



Email in to ARAORGANIZING or fax form to: 202-637-5398 attention: Event Checklist  
 CC to: [araorganizing@retiredamericans.org](mailto:araorganizing@retiredamericans.org) [dpere@retiredamericans.org](mailto:dpere@retiredamericans.org), [rkearney@retiredamericans.org](mailto:rkearney@retiredamericans.org)

What:

When:

Where:

Who:

(Please Note Invited Elected Officials)

Is this a coalition event?  YES or  NO If Yes – Name Lead Org and Supporting Orgs:

Primary Field Contact (Name / Phone / Email):

Purpose of Event/Measures of Success:

### National Office Provide:

*Communications Dept:* Circle or Check Mark Appropriate Needs & Date Needed By

Press Release / Advisory  
 ( ) Help Editing ( ) Help Creating

Need Press List & / or Assistance Pitching

Website Event listing  
 ( ) National ( ) State

LTE/ OpEd /Speech Writing/Talking Points Assistance

Friday Alert Mention

Social media assistance ~ Facebook, Twitter, Flipcam, YouTube)

*Field Mobilization Dept:*

SALSA (list date needed to be sent by and universe (CDs, Statewide, zip code)):

Handouts:

Request for Spokesperson:

Materials, i.e. posters, flyers, T-shirts, buttons, etc. (Please list quantity of each):



**POST EVENT DETAILS – Required 24 hours after the event**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State: \_\_\_\_\_ CD: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

**QUICK FACTS POST EVENT FIELD REPORT**

Quick questions to answer on your event. You can keep these short and sweet, but fill out at least 24 hours after the event.

1. Approximate number of attendees
2. Theme / Event type –
3. Media Present (note radio, print, TV, press and their names and news organization, etc.)
4. Did any elected officials or other VIP’s attend? Did they speak? If so, summarize briefly their comments? Did they say anything we should be concerned about or is there a need to follow up with them?
5. Any feedback from you or the audience that you think is relevant?
6. Any other factors that are important to know?
7. Was this event successful? Rate on a scale from 1(poor) – 10(fantastic) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Did the event meet your goals? Explain briefly.
8. Social Media details:

Videos taken: Yes, or No. If yes: How many? \_\_\_\_  
 Type / Description: \_\_\_\_\_ (interview, footage, etc.)

Is this premier video that should be posted on our website?

Uploaded to YouTube field station  Yes or  No.   
 If No, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Facebook posting  Yes or  No.

Website posting.  Yes or  No.

Additional Use of Social Media (email post event to stakeholder, MOC, Reporters, etc):





## POSTCARDS! PETITIONS!

### SUGGESTIONS ON STRATEGIC USE OF THE ALLIANCE'S SUPER COMMITTEE POST CARDS AND PETITIONS – READ CAREFULLY

As the Super Committee is busy discussing a deal, we at the Alliance have been busy working on a campaign to spread our message. A major component of this plan involves making sure that our message is heard by all members of Congress during the next couple of months. To ensure that this happens, we have created to important materials for you to use as you mobilize seniors in your communities. These materials are a **petition and postcard**. These are not only important tools to use to get our message out, they are important tools to help you:

- (1) collect names and contact information of potential activists and
- (2) distribute to your current membership base to educate them on the Congressional challenges we face
- (3) great props to hold earned media events around – such as delivery to a member of congress

#### POSTCARD

The postcard is a document that our members and retiree activist can use to express their thoughts to their members of Congress. As you hold events over the next couple of months, please have your members and retiree activists fill out the postcard. Then you will collect the bottom, postcard portion and let them keep the top portion. Once you have collected the postcards you have the choice to give them to your member of Congress yourself or you can send them to the national office of the Alliance and we will send them to the appropriate member of Congress.

#### PETITION

The petition asks members and other retiree activists to sign their name in support of Social Security, Medicare, and Social Security. **As you collect signatures please make copies of the petition and send the copy to the Alliance.** We are going to use this information to grow our activist list, so it is imperative that you send these to the national office. Here is what happens when you send the petition to the National Office:

1. We compile the petition signers into a list
2. We send them (if they have email) a thank you email with an update on the Super Committee and how they can continue to make an impact
3. As quickly as we can, we will send the petition signer names **BACK** to you via email in an excel spreadsheet.
4. Spread them far and wide!





# Tell Congress: Take Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid OFF the Chopping Block

Social Security is one of our country's greatest, most effective and popular programs. In fact, Social Security is currently running a surplus and is solvent for decades to come. It has not contributed one cent to the nation's deficit and should be OFF the table as a bargaining chip in talks about the budget deficit and federal spending.

Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid escaped a first round of budget cuts in the debt ceiling agreement that was reached in August. Prior to the vote, Alliance members sent nearly 5000 messages to Washington, urging lawmakers to not cut Social Security or Medicare. YOUR VOICE MAKES A DIFFERENCE!



However, more threats loom on the horizon for these programs. The legislation that extends government borrowing power immediately cuts billions in spending, and also cuts \$1 trillion in spending by 2021. Also, the new law creates a so-called "Super Committee" on Capitol Hill to find an additional \$1.5 trillion in spending cuts by Thanksgiving! Some have suggested that Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid could be top targets for cuts, including lower Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs), an increase in the Medicare eligibility age, and higher Medicare co-pays and premiums. Now is a vital moment to take action and protect these live-saving programs!

-----*You can make a difference! Tear along this line and complete the other side*-----

Please Put  
**44¢**  
Stamp Here



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# What's at Stake with the Super Committee?

As part of the second stage of the deal, congressional leaders have appointed a Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, or "Super Committee." This Committee is charged with finding an additional \$1.5 trillion in deficit cuts by November 23. The Super Committee could propose more cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other programs vital to seniors. We are concerned that the Super Committee may propose:

- ✓ Raising the Social Security age to 70
- ✓ Reducing the Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA)
- ✓ Raising the Medicare eligibility age to 67
- ✓ Cutting the Medicaid funding that helps seniors afford long-term care
- ✓ Taking away your traditional Medicare benefits, leaving you at the mercy of insurance companies

Here is How You Can Help Save Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare.

Below, please write what these programs mean to you, sign your name, and send your card to the address on the back. Your State Alliance for Retired Americans will be collecting thousands of these cards and presenting them to Congress. For more information on how you can get involved, go to <http://www.retiredamericans.org/>

Please cut along this line.

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-----  
*I'm writing this note to share with you what Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare mean to me and my family. I am counting on you to support and protect these vital programs and vote against any cuts to them. Please make sure that these programs will be here for generations to come!*

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**Sincerely,**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_





## Tell Congress: Say YES to Seniors! Keep Seniors out of the Hospital and out of the Poorhouse

Members of the "Super Committee" in Congress, which was established as part of the debt deal, may consider devastating cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. With countless American seniors living at or near poverty, even minor cuts to these programs could threaten the healthcare and financial security of millions.

**YES to Social Security!** Social Security belongs to the people who have worked hard all their lives and contributed to it. Social Security does not contribute a penny to the deficit and should not be cut!

**YES to Medicare!** Before Medicare, roughly half of all American seniors had no health insurance at all. Even small cuts to Medicare could keep seniors from seeking healthcare or plunge them into poverty.

**YES to Medicaid!** Medicaid is the only way that most seniors can afford nursing home and other types of long-term care. 70 percent of seniors could lose this care if it were not for Medicaid.

(1) \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME EMAIL

\_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP

(2) \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME EMAIL

\_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP

(3) \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME EMAIL

\_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP

(4) \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME EMAIL

\_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP





## IDEAS FOR EARNED MEDIA / DIRECT ACTIONS

### TENT CITIES: "SENIOR TOWN"

1. Goal: Give a visual demonstration of just how close seniors are living to poverty, and what could happen to seniors nationwide if the super committee and Congress make cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.
2. Location: high foot traffic areas, near offices or events (e.g. town halls, fundraisers) of hostile Members of Congress, near events that could attract and educate a friendly audience, use as protest near events such as fundraisers of hostile organizations.

#### KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Do you have permission to set up at a given location?
  - Do you need a permit?
  - Is it private property?
  - This could be done as a direct action, doing the event and having law enforcement or private security kick "homeless seniors" out, showing further what could happen if these cuts were made.
3. Finding your earned media hook:
    - **Anniversary – The stock market crash of 1929 and the stock market crash of 2008 both happened in October. Could you connect them?**
    - Is there a connection to any ongoing local media coverage of senior/retiree issues or how local people are hurting during the recession?
    - Use a tent city as a protest near the office of or an event especially a high end fundraiser) for a hostile Member of Congress Why would the general public hostile Members of Congress, events with high foot traffic that could attract
  4. Setup: These are small example of a modern day "Hooverville" as they had in the Great Depression. These could be called "Seniorville" with a small number of tents, people who are "residents" of Seniorville that could be giving out postcards and petitions that focus on keeping seniors out of poverty. There will also be our updated factsheets on the super committee.
  5. Presentation: Also think about the way you might want your "Seniorville residents" dressed. Are there walkers and other equipment seniors rely on strewn around? A couple pieces of small furniture from where they used to live? You may want to do a brief speaking program, or simply have one or two people that are designated speakers. How thematic do you want to be? Is one of your speakers the mayor of Seniorville?
  6. Visuals: The pages below have pictures of tent cities ("Hoovervilles") from the Great Depression and modern-day tent cities that have sprung up as a result of the current recession. Let us know if you want help finding ways to use these kinds of visuals. **I would point out one picture of a little girl living in a tent city during the Great Depression. Is she being forced to move back into a tent city 75 years later?**



7. Respecting those already homeless: It's important to remember that there are already clusters of homeless people living somewhere in most towns. The focus of these events is looking at a new group of homeless: people who worked hard all their lives, played by the rules and thought they had earned a safe, secure retirement. Thanks to Congress, they are now staring at living in "Seniorville."
8. Including logical allies: Could your tent city be Intergenerational? Will there be room for my granddaughter? My friend living with a disability? Just more food for thought.



Tent City in Sacramento





## A TUTORIAL on EDITORIAL BOARD MEETINGS

### Editorial Board Meetings – From Soup to Nuts!

An editorial board meeting will include the editorial page editor, an editorial writer and maybe a reporter who has been or will be writing on the issue.

- 1) Decide 2-4 people who will represent the group in the meeting. Participants could include the state or local president, and one or two members that have been directly impacted by the issue being discussed.
- 2) Call the editorial page editor for an appointment. Editors generally like to meet between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Be sure to ask who from the newspaper will be present at the meeting.

*“Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I’m with the \_\_\_\_\_. (We’re a grassroots organization that works on retiree issues in the state) I’m calling because we are working to \_\_\_\_\_. We’d really like to talk to you and your staff about the issues we’re working on. Would you be interested in meeting with us? [Talk logistics] [Get a commitment from him/her on the phone by setting up a time or having them call you back/you following up]”*

(Smaller newspapers may not have a full editorial board, and the editor may want to meet with you along with a reporter.)

#### PREPARE FOR MEETING:

- 1) A **pre-ed board meeting** should be held with all participants at least a day before the scheduled meeting. (This allows you time to gather more facts and information that may not have been thought of ahead of time.)
- 2) Search the newspaper’s archives for all articles/op-eds/letters to the editor relating to the issue at hand & read
- 3) Look at the backgrounds of the newspaper folks you’ll be dealing with. (Bio, articles, op-ed, conservative vs. liberal, etc.)
- 4) Have a **briefing packet prepared** to give to the editorial board. The packet could include:
  - A one-pager on the coalition’s mission, goals, members
  - Frequently asked questions & responses (talking points)
  - Fact sheet
  - Summary of work the group has done around the issue and other information that helps recognize your group as the expert in the area on this issue
  - Contact info





**A TUTORIAL on  
EDITORIAL BOARD MEETINGS  
CONTINUED**

**MAKING THE PRESENTATION:**

***Remember you are speaking on-the-record***

- One participant should act as the spokesperson. The spokesperson facilitates the meeting by introducing herself/himself and asking other members of the team to briefly introduce themselves. The spokesperson then presents the group's position in a 10-15 minute presentation (She/he passes out the briefing packet so the Ed Board can follow along and take notes). After the initial presentation the spokesperson should ask the editorial board if they have any questions and then direct them to the proper members of the team.
- Each participant should stay on message – repeating the main talking points and not arguing with the editorial board members. Stay calm if the editorial board takes a different view than you.

**CALL TO ACTION: ASK THE NEWSPAPER FOR A SPECIFIC RESPONSE/ACTION:**

- Ask them to make a decision on their editorial stance based on the facts you have presented
- Ask if you can submit an opinion page article for their consideration
- Ask if they would be willing to write an article focusing on the individuals that have been impacted by the issue
- Ask them to call the spokesperson if they have any follow up questions/comments
- Send a follow-up letter within 24 hours thanking them for the meeting and restating your position on the issue and invite them to contact you with any questions.





**STATE SNAPSHOT: Reaching an Editorial Board: A Success Story**  
**by Midge Slater, Field Organizer**  
**Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans**

During the course of 2010, one of the editorial board members at the Des Moines Register did an occasional story about aging in Iowa, mostly human interest. During the week between Christmas and New Year she interviewed a woman with ovarian cancer who talked about things she needed to tell her daughter before she died, and it was compelling.

Missing from her series, however, was a collective look at the situation with seniors in Iowa who will make up about one third of the population by 2030, 10 percent of whom live in poverty. So I sent the editorial board member an e-mail praising her most recent article and the series as a whole, telling her about our ongoing look at the economic situation with seniors in Iowa, and attaching a copy of our press release on securing our WOW (Wider Opportunities for Women) grant that had gone out weeks before without response from the media. It was a stab in the dark, but within a day she responded with a couple of questions and asked if I had discussed this with anyone else. I responded negatively and told her that I had come to the Register first and only with a "scoop."

This led to the invitation for an Op Ed, which we got help putting together and I sent, along with a picture of state Alliance President Don Rowen, to our new contact. It appeared on 1/1/11, and within a week we had a face-to-face meeting with her to explain in more depth what our Elder Economic Security Initiative is all about.

I believe that some of the success is related to contacting her personally, and some to filling in a gap during a slow time for news. When we launched our initiative on Sept 20, 2011, she did not respond to the press release, but this is not a slow news time with all of the political activity in Iowa, and the information came from our national grantor, not the local state Alliance - a lesson learned for future reference.

What we are considering now is contacting the myriad of small town papers in Iowa who are hungry for items relating to their communities, and what could be more compelling at a time when Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are up for review than a story about the number of people in their county who are living economically insecure (below poverty).

Good luck in this work to all our state Alliance friends!





## SAMPLE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SAMPLE 1

As a retired \_\_\_\_\_, I am worried that this new Super Committee on Capitol Hill may cut Social Security as a way of lowering federal spending.

All of us currently on Social Security paid for it through every paycheck we ever earned. Seniors here in [name of state or region] are already having a hard time getting by, so the last thing we should do is cut Social Security just so politicians can give more tax breaks for millionaires and big corporations.

Social Security is a promise that our government makes to everyone who works hard and pays their taxes. A promise is a promise, not something you can break just because the big lobbyists are asking for more tax breaks.

### SAMPLE 2

As a retired \_\_\_\_\_, I am worried that a new deficit reduction committee on Capitol Hill could raise the retirement age for Social Security.

Raising the retirement age would be a lousy deal for workers here in \_\_\_\_\_, particularly in construction, manufacturing, and service sector. I just don't see how anyone could work those jobs in their 70s.

The debate over the retirement age shows just how out of touch some people in politics and the media are. Maybe you could work well past 70 if all you had to do was give speeches or babble way on a TV news show. But the rest of us live a very different life.

Franklin Roosevelt created Social Security because he thought it was wrong that people had to work until they died. We cannot allow our budget problems to turn back the clock on the progress our nation has made.





## SAMPLE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SAMPLE 3

I would like my fellow retirees here in [state or area] to pay close attention to the new so-called Super Committee on Capitol Hill that is looking to cut trillions from federal spending.

I am worried that they will cut Social Security as a way of lowering the budget deficit. What people need to know is that Social Security is not why we have a big debt. Social Security is something we all contribute to through taxes taken out of every paycheck we ever earned. The deficit is caused by bad spending choices, such as all these tax breaks for millionaires and big businesses.

Whenever you hear a politician say we have to cut Social Security in order to lower the deficit, don't believe it. To me, politicians say those things because they don't want you to know about all the big breaks they are giving to corporate lobbyists.

Social Security is the only way that most seniors here in [ ] are able to get by. Yes, we need to improve our economy, but punishing people who paid Social Security taxes all their lives is the wrong way to do it.

### SAMPLE 4

I don't think enough people know about it, but there is a new panel on Capitol Hill – known as the Super Committee – that is looking to make big cuts in federal spending.

As a retired \_\_\_\_\_, I am worried that they will cut Medicare. For many retirees, Medicare is the only way seniors can afford to see a doctor or fill a prescription. A lot of people worked for places that were supposed to provide retiree health coverage, but many of these companies have broken their word. Medicare is all most of us have.

I can just picture all the lobbyists from the big drug and insurance companies running around Capitol Hill. They'll want to make changes in Medicare that will take better care of their health than ours.

I hope that our state's Senators and Representatives remember the seniors back here in [name of state] who count on Medicare to stay healthy.





## SAMPLE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SAMPLE 5

Retirees and people of all ages who worry about the high cost of nursing home and long-term care need to keep a close watch on a new budget panel on Capitol Hill – the so-called Super Committee – that is considering massive spending cuts by the end of this year.

For most people, Medicaid is the only way most people can afford nursing home and long-term care. From what I read, this special committee in Congress is taking a close look at programs like Medicaid that help many people here in [name of state].

It makes me mad that at a time when we give all sorts of tax breaks and loopholes to the wealthy, some people think we don't have enough money to help those who are sick or injured. These are the politicians who lecture us about values?





## Sample Opinion Editorial

Title: Retirees Face New Threats on Capitol Hill

[name of state] retirees need to keep a close eye on Capitol Hill, where a new congressional panel – the so-called “Super Committee” – is looking for \$1.5 trillion in budget cuts by Thanksgiving. I am worried that this could lead to big changes in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, programs that keep millions of seniors healthy and out of poverty.

Last summer’s showdown over the debt ceiling led to a classic case of procrastination, as many tough choices were punted down the field to the new “Super Committee.” We should be concerned about the possibility that this panel may recommend budget cuts that would be terribly hurtful for both [name of state] retirees and workers.

Much of this budget debate is based upon the flawed premise that Social Security is to blame for our fiscal problems. Social Security hasn’t added a penny to our deficit. It’s fully-funded by payroll taxes from workers and employers. We pay for Social Security through every paycheck we ever earn. No one is getting rich off Social Security, as the average senior’s monthly check – not much than \$1000 per month – can barely meet the cost of living here in [name of state/region]. As retirees and older workers watch their private pensions, home equity, and 401(k) plans disappear, Social Security is needed more than ever.

I am concerned that the “Super Committee” could threaten new improvements in Medicare that lower the cost of prescription drugs, help seniors get free annual testing for serious diseases, and close the “donut hole” coverage gap in Medicare Part D. These new benefits for seniors were in the 2010 health reform law, but could go by the wayside if Super Committee does the bidding of the big health insurance and drug companies who have always wanted Medicare to take better care of their health than ours.

[name of state] retirees need to be concerned about Medicaid, which is the only way that most seniors and their families can afford nursing home and long-term care. 70 percent of seniors would be unable to receive this care if it were not for Medicaid. The “Super Committee” must not turn its back on the millions of American families who each day worry about the high cost of nursing home and long-term care for themselves or a loved one.

Today’s retirees want our economy to turn around. We worry about our children and grandchildren, and we do not want a large debt to the legacy we leave behind. But there is a right and wrong way to do this. The right way is to finally address our fundamentally-flawed tax code, in which sacrifice is distributed terribly unfairly. Call us old school, but our generation does not believe in tax breaks for yachts and corporate jets, or that big corporations like General Electric can avoid paying any taxes.



In the past 75 years, our nation has made great progress – we are no longer a nation where you work until you die. Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid have helped millions of retirees live their golden years in good health, economic security, and peace of mind. We should not allow our nation’s fiscal challenges to end the hopes and dreams of a safe and secure retirement for future generations.

*X is President of the [name of state] Alliance for Retired Americans. For more information...*

**This should be submitted to your local paper. If you need help figuring out where to send it or need a statewide media list for you state, please contact the Alliance’s Communications Department.**



# Sample Press Advisory on Petition / Post Card Delivery

*To be sent RIGHT BEFORE your event*

[State logo]

**FOR PLANNING PURPOSES**

**[Date]**

**Contact:** [Name/Phone/Email]

## **Save Our Seniors! Don't Let Washington Politicians Drive Seniors into Poverty**

*Seniors deliver [#] [signatures/post cards] demanding [Rep. X] defend Social  
Security, Medicare, Medicaid from new committee*

**[City]** --- At [time] on [date], members of the [state] Alliance for Retired Americans and allies will hand deliver [#] [signatures/postcards] to [location] demanding that [Rep. X] defend Social Security and Medicare in evaluating recommendations from the Super Committee tasked with reducing the federal deficit. A brief press conference will follow.

In August, President Obama signed a Budget Control Act that established the Super Committee, a bipartisan Congressional committee charged with identifying \$1.5 trillion in deficit reduction that could include Social Security cuts, as well as Medicare and Medicaid cuts. The Super Committee, made up of 6 Democrats and 6 Republicans, will report to Congress by late November. If a majority of committee members reach agreement on a \$1.5 trillion deficit-reduction plan, it will get an up-or-down majority vote by late December. There can be no amendments or Senate filibuster.

Some members of the Super Committee have narrowly targeted cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid – with scarce attention to the consequences this would have on seniors of today and tomorrow. Without their monthly Social Security check, 44% of American seniors [or x% of state seniors] would fall below the poverty line. Even now, the average retired worker scrapes by on \$1,174 a month, and a third of all retirees have Social Security as their only source of income. Many seniors already have to choose between food and being homeless; how much more money will politicians steal from Social Security, and how many more seniors will they be willing to kick into the streets? Before Medicare, roughly half of all American seniors had no health insurance at all. With health costs skyrocketing, many seniors will not be able to afford healthcare if their Medicare benefits are cut.

**Who:**

**Where:**

**When:**

###

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The State (X) Alliance for Retired Americans is a statewide non-profit, non-partisan organization that advocates for the rights and well being of over X amount retirees and their families.



# Sample Press Advisory on Tent City Action

*To be sent RIGHT BEFORE your event*

[State logo]

**FOR PLANNING PURPOSES**

**[Date]**

**Contact:** [Name/Phone/Email]

## **“TENT CITY” Highlights Foreseeable Future for [State] Seniors**

*More Congressional budget cuts on backs of seniors will prove disastrous for many*

[City] --- At [time, date, location], members of the Alliance for Retired Americans will hold a press conference in a provisional tent city to call attention to the significance of programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid to [State] seniors. They will outline the challenges ahead as a Super Committee meets in Washington this fall tasked with reducing the federal deficit – many of its members with an eye on slashing these essential programs. The event will draw attention to the number of [State] seniors are already dangerously close to the poverty line and how their lives would dramatically change with even small cuts to the programs.

“Seniors depend on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for their basic needs. Cuts to any of these programs would prove absolutely disastrous to [#] [State] [residents/seniors] and would result in many losing their homes and basic means of supporting themselves. Balancing the budget on the backs of seniors and the middle class is not an option. We’ve already allowed Wall Street to run roughshod over this country. We are relying on [Rep. X – if member of Super Committee, highlight that] to safeguard these programs and stand strong for [State] seniors” said [state Alliance leader & title].

**Who:**

**Where:**

**When:**

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The State (X) Alliance for Retired Americans is a statewide non-profit, non-partisan organization that advocates for the rights and well being of over X amount retirees and their families.



[State logo]

# Sample Press Release on Petition / Post Card Delivery

*To be sent RIGHT AFTER your event*

## FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

[Date]

Contact: [Name/Phone/Email]

## **Seniors deliver [#] [signatures/post cards] demanding [Rep. X] defend Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid**

[City] --- Today, members of the [state] Alliance for Retired Americans and allies hand delivered [#] [signatures/postcards] to [Rep. X's CITY office], demanding that [he/she] not allow Social Security and Medicare to be put on the chopping block in upcoming budget discussions. The delivery comes with special concern about recommendations to come from a Super Committee in Washington tasked with reducing the federal deficit.

Some members of the Super Committee have narrowly targeted cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid – with scarce attention to the consequences this would have on seniors in the present and future. Without their monthly Social Security check, 44% of American seniors [or x% of state seniors] would fall below the poverty line. Even now, the average retired worker scrapes by on \$1,174 a month, and a third of all retirees have Social Security as their only source of income. Many seniors already have to choose between food and being homeless; how much more money will politicians steal from Social Security, and how many more seniors will they be willing to kick into the streets? Before Medicare, roughly half of all American seniors had no health insurance at all. With health costs skyrocketing, many seniors will not be able to afford healthcare if their Medicare benefits are cut.

[State Alliance leader] said, [QUOTE from remarks]

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The State (X) Alliance for Retired Americans is a statewide non-profit, non-partisan organization that advocates for the rights and well being of over X amount retirees and their families.



# Sample Press Release on Tent City Action

*To be sent RIGHT AFTER your event*

[State logo]

[Date]

Contact: [Name/Phone/Email]

## **“TENT CITY” Highlights Bleak Future for [State] Seniors**

*Demonstrates impact of budget cuts on backs of seniors*

[City] --- Today at [location], members of the Alliance for Retired Americans constructed a provisional tent city to draw attention to the significance of programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid for [State] seniors. They drew attention to a new Super Committee meeting in Washington this fall, tasked with reducing the federal deficit that could threaten to slash these essential programs, and urged [Rep. X] to oppose any cuts to the programs. The event today focused on the number of [State] seniors already dangerously close to the poverty line – and how their lives would dramatically change with just small cuts to the programs.

[state Alliance leader & title] said, “[Rep. X] needs to know how important Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid is for [State residents’] basic survival. Cuts to any of these programs would prove absolutely disastrous to [#] [State] [residents/seniors], resulting in many being unable to afford their homes, food, and medications.”

[Another speaker] said, “Wall Street greed has ruined this country. It’s time to go to work balancing our budget by closing tax loopholes and making billionaires pay their share. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are crucial programs that we pay into during our working years, and they should be kept intact.”

Photo link(s): [if relevant, or attach to email]

Video link(s):

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The State (X) Alliance for Retired Americans is a statewide non-profit, non-partisan organization that advocates for the rights and well being of over X amount retirees and their families.





## Promote Event with Social Media

### I. Before Events

*Promote events with media formats such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter to encourage participation. Boost the reach of your event by making content about it socially shareable.*

1. Post information about the event or media advisory on state political blogs to get the word out. If you cannot post, send to the blog editor.
2. Send advisory/info and pitch events to bloggers who might turn out to gather photo/video and do a write-up
3. Create an event on Facebook, (or Meetup, Eventbrite) and invite your friends/allies to attend. Encourage friends to invite others, share the link.
4. Send blast e-mail or salsa message for turn-out
5. If on Twitter, use the hashtags #SocialSecurity #Medicare #Medicaid #GOP #SuperCommittee and so forth to help people find you across social media platforms.

### II. During Events

1. Gather photo & video.
2. Interview attendees on video or gather quotes for write-ups.

### III. After Events

*Contrary to popular belief, the event is not done when everyone leaves. There's more to do to make sure the event leaves a lasting impression, and lays the ground work for next year's celebration.*

1. Consolidate photo, video, notes and press clips
2. Post record of events via Facebook, blogs, video & photo sharing. For example: <http://bit.ly/mTW2w1>, <http://bit.ly/krRcoH>
3. Send a write-up with photo/video and press links to lmarkwar@retiredamericans.org and your state political blogs. Post yourself if you have an account.
4. Upload video to Youtube and the "tag" people and issue so that it's easily searchable
5. Upload photos, video, news coverage to state website (if relevant)
6. Be sure to continue communication with all the attendees. The web page where users can add their social media contact information is vital towards this end, as are the emails you probably have access to. Send them thank-yous, updates, and information. Be sure to promote "friend-ing" or "following" your social media accounts.
7. Also, don't forget to share all the media generated by the event. Upload photos to Flickr and post videos on YouTube. Share with attendees and interested parties via email.
8. Keep communicating – good & regular communication is central to the success of any gathering. Keeping in contact with members and press that attended will pay off.





## Tweeting on the Super Committee

### WHY TWEET??

Twitter, among other social media tools, is important to elected officials (including Super Committee members), journalists, and others. Don't miss your chance to utilize your voice in this important and growing forum!

◇ Members of Congress respond to pressure from their constituents and the public

◇ Members of the Super Committee will be listening to input from social networks

◇ Personal & sincere messages matter, as well as numbers

**Useful hashtags:** #deficit #supercommittee #socialsecurity #medicare #medicaid #p2

### Members of Super Committee Twitter Handles (names):

@PattyMurray = Patty Murray (D-WA)

@RepHensarling = Jeb Hensarling (R-TX)

Max Baucus (D-MT) = doesn't have one

@RepDaveCamp = Dave Camp (R-MI)

@JohnKerry = John Kerry (D-MA)

@RepFredUpton = Fred Upton (R-MI)

@Clyburn = James Clyburn (D-SC)

@SenJonKyl = John Kyl (R-AZ)

@RepBecerra = Xavier Becerra (D-CA)

@SenToomey = Pat Toomey (R-PA)

@ChrisVanHollen = Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)

@robportman = Rob Portman (R-OH)

\*Use the Twitter name of your Rep. to *mention* them or to *direct a message* to them

### Sample Tweets:

- ✓ **Tell the #deficit #supercommittee: Don't cut #SocialSecurity, #Medicare or #Medicaid benefits. <http://bit.ly/otlZ2u> #p2**
- ✓ **Dear @RepHensarling, the New Deal needs to be #OffTheTable from the #SuperCommittee discussions - RT if you agree #p2**
- ✓ **What do voters in #SuperCommittee members' states & districts want? #NoSocSecCuts #p2**
- ✓ **To me, unjust #socialsecurity #cuts would mean moving in with my kids. #supercommittee must remember, 4 seniors, small cuts mean everything**





**The Super Committee:  
What May be at Stake for Social  
Security, Medicare & Medicaid  
October 2011**

On August 2, 2011, Congress passed the Budget Control Act of 2011, allowing the Obama Administration to lift the debt ceiling – the legal limit on borrowing by the federal government. The agreement is a two-step process, which includes an initial increase of \$900 billion. A second increase of \$1.2 trillion to \$1.5 trillion would occur after Congress votes on recommendations by a “Super Committee” to make spending cuts of the same amount. This committee will have until November 23, 2011 to identify cuts. The agreement also requires a vote prior to the end of the year on the *Balanced Budget Amendment*, which would cap spending to 18 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

<b>Element of Proposal</b>	<b>Explanation of the Super Committee</b>
<b>Structure of Super Committee and Dates of Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 members, 3 appointed by each Leader of both chambers, from each party (6 Democrats and 6 Republicans).</li> <li>• Needs 7 votes for its recommendations to be sent for a full vote in Congress. These recommendations would be treated as fast-track legislation, requiring only a majority vote; not subject to amendments or Senate filibuster.</li> <li>• Must report legislation by November 23, 2011. Full Congress must vote on Committee plan by December 23, 2011.</li> </ul>
<b>Charge of Super Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce deficit by an additional \$1.5 trillion over 10 years.</li> <li>• “Provide recommendations to improve the short-term and long-term fiscal imbalance of the Federal Government.”</li> </ul>
<b>If Super Committee and Congress Fail to Approve Up to \$1.5 Trillion in Deficit Reduction...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automatic cuts will begin in 2013 for any amount not approved by Congress up to \$1.2 trillion. Cuts will be made equally to defense and non-defense spending.</li> <li>• Social Security, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, veterans’ benefits, civilian and military retirement programs, and other programs serving low-income families would be exempt from these cuts.</li> <li>• Medicare cuts would be capped at 2% a year starting 2013- 2021. Cuts would not affect benefits but would affect payments to providers and insurance plans.</li> </ul>



# The Super Committee & Potential Threats to Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid

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This fall, the Super Committee will recommend legislation to reduce the deficit by \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. It is possible that this legislation will recommend cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid in the name of deficit reduction. The following are some proposals you may hear about and an explanation of how they would impact your retirement security:

## Potential Super Committee Threats to Social Security

***The Chained CPI:*** Prior deficit reduction negotiations have proposed changing the formula used to calculate the annual COLA to the so-called chained CPI, which would cut the benefits of those receiving Social Security today. After ten years average retiree benefits would be cut by about \$600 a year, and after 20 years they would be cut by about \$1,000 a year. This “technical” change assumes that seniors will substitute one good for a cheaper version to make ends meet. While that may work for certain goods, a senior cannot just substitute triple bypass surgery with a double because it’s cheaper. Plain and simple, **the chained CPI is a COLA cut!**

***Raising the Retirement Age:*** Raising the normal retirement age beyond age 67, as recommended by the co-chairs of the Fiscal Commission, is a 13% benefit cut on top of the 13% cut already made when the retirement age was increased from 65 to 67, according to the Social Security Administration. While the life expectancy of upper income earners has increased, the life expectancy of middle and low wage earners has not increased significantly to justify another increase in the retirement age. Additionally, the job market for older workers is bleak. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the percentage of unemployed, older workers who want a job but can't find one has increased while the unemployment rate for other age groups has improved. **Pushing retirement even farther out of reach would be devastating for millions of older Americans.**

***Means-Testing Social Security:*** Proposals to means-test Social Security benefits may seem fair at first; after all, the wealthy don’t need Social Security, right? The trouble with this though is that Social Security’s popular support is grounded in the fact that Social Security is a program for every worker. Workers contribute to Social Security and earn the right to benefits upon retirement. This popular support is the very shield that makes politicians think twice before making cuts to the program. **If this connection between contributions earnings and benefits is eliminated, Social Security will lose its popular support,** leaving it highly vulnerable to benefit cuts in the name of deficit reduction.



## Potential Super Committee Cuts to Medicare

***Voucherize Medicare:*** This proposal included in the House Republican budget ends Medicare as we know it. Instead seniors would get a small stipend towards the cost of their health care, which they would need to obtain through a private insurance company. The amount would not be enough to keep up with medical inflation. According to the Congressional Budget Office, by 2030 the Medicare vouchers would be about \$9,750 a year while annual medical costs would be about \$30,460, leaving seniors with an average \$20,700 to pay out-of-pocket.

***Raise Medicare's Eligibility Age:*** Proposals to raise the age of eligibility from 65 to 67 is a step in the wrong direction. This population faces the most difficulty in obtaining insurance due to chronic health conditions. These seniors would most likely have to get a job to get insured, but jobs are difficult to find for this group to due to age discrimination.

***Instituting a Single Deductible for both Medicare Part A and B:*** Budget hawks, including the Co-Chairs of the Fiscal Commission have suggested that instead of having two separate deductibles for Medicare for Part A (hospital coverage) and Part B (doctor and outpatient coverage), there should be a single deductible (\$550- \$600) for both. Some seniors have taken that to mean a savings for Medicare beneficiaries, but that is not the case. Currently, the Medicare Part B deductible is \$162 and the Part A deductible is \$1,132 with coinsurance for a hospital stay of up to 60 days. Individuals who are not admitted to the hospital do not have to pay the hospital deductible, thus their yearly deductible for 2011 is \$162. For those who end up in the hospital, additional copayments could be required.

***Restrict First Dollar Coverage under Medigap:*** Currently, Medigap covers most of a beneficiary's co-payments. This option, which is based on the idea that beneficiaries over-utilize benefits, would restrict the first \$500 of an enrollee's cost-sharing liabilities and limit coverage to 50% of the next \$5,000 in Medicare cost-sharing, requiring seniors to pay for this out-of-pocket.

***Home Health Co-pay:*** This option, proposed by the Medicare Payment Advisory Board (MedPAC), recommends charging a 5% copayment for home health visits. This would amount to \$150 copayment for each 60-day home care treatment period, or episode.

## Potential Super Committee Cuts to Medicaid

Medicaid is the government safety net program that provides health care benefits to 60 million individuals, including pregnant women, children, people with disabilities and low-income seniors. The program, which is funded by both the state and federal revenues, also pays for 62% of all long term care spending (i.e., nursing home, home health care) in the United States. Of all the entitlement programs, Medicaid is the most vulnerable and most likely to see cuts.



## Super Committee Members

**Representative Jim Clyburn** (D-S.C.) is the assistant Democratic leader, the third-ranking member of House Democratic Leadership. Clyburn received a lifetime score of 98% in the 2011 Alliance for Retired Americans Voting Record (“Voting Record”).

**Representative Xavier Becerra** (D-CA) is the House Democratic Caucus’ vice chairman and the ranking member of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security. Becerra received a lifetime score of 99% in the 2010 Voting Record.

**Representative Chris Van Hollen** (D-Md.) is the ranking member of the House Budget Committee. He received a lifetime score of 100% in the 2010 Voting Record.

**Representative Jeb Hensarling** (R-TX) is the Chair of the House Republican Conference and a member of the House Financial Services Committee. He received a lifetime score of 3% in the 2010 Voting Record.

**Representative Dave Camp** (R-MI) is the Chair of House Ways and Means Committee and Chair of the Joint Committee on Taxation. He received a lifetime score of 7% in the 2010 Voting Record.

**Representative Fred Upton** (R-MI) is the Chair of House Energy and Commerce Committee. He received a lifetime score of 19% in the 2010 Voting Record.

**Senator John Kerry** (D-MA) is the Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He received a lifetime score of 96% in the 2010 Voting Record.

**Senator Patty Murray** (D-WA) is the Chair of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee and Chair of the Senate Employment and Workplace Safety Subcommittee. She holds a lifetime score of 97 percent in the Voting Record.

**Senator Max Baucus** (D-MT) is the Senate Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Taxation and Chair of the Senate Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee. He holds a lifetime score of 77% in the Voting Record.

**Senator Jon Kyl** (R-AZ) is the GOP whip, ranking member of the Senate Taxation and IRS Oversight Subcommittee and ranking member of Senate Crime and Terrorism Subcommittee. He holds a lifetime score of 2% in the Voting Record.

**Senator Pat Toomey** (R-PA) is the ranking member of the Senate Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and Insurance Subcommittee. His House lifetime score was 6% in the Voting Record.

**Senator Rob Portman** (R-OH) is the ranking member of the Senate Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee and ranking member of Senate Contracting Oversight Subcommittee. His House lifetime score was 3% in the Voting Record.

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### **Contact the Super Committee**

The Super Committee has a website at: [www.deficitreduction.gov](http://www.deficitreduction.gov). On this website, you can watch hearings, read the latest news, view a calendar of events and send a written message directly to the Super Committee by clicking on the “Write to Us Today” tab on the bottom half of the website: [www.deficitreduction.gov](http://www.deficitreduction.gov).

The Super Committee wants your input! Visit the website to take advantage of this unique opportunity to write directly to the Committee today. Tell them about the need to protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid for you and your family!





## Smart Ways to Improve the Economy While Protecting Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid *October 2011*

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Today's retirees want our economy to turn around. They worry about their children and grandchildren, and do not want a large debt to be the legacy they leave behind. Importantly though, they understand that there is a right and wrong way to do this. The wrong way is to continue giving tax breaks for yachts and corporate jets, or allowing big corporations like General Electric to avoid paying any taxes while many Americans go hungry. The right way is to finally address our fundamentally-flawed tax code, in which sacrifice is distributed terribly unfairly. The following are smart ways to reduce the deficit and improve our economy while protecting Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid:

✓ **Allowing Medicare to negotiate the prices of prescription drugs with drug companies would save \$200 billion over 10 years!** Every savvy consumer knows you should pay less when you buy in bulk, but Medicare is currently prohibited from doing just that. Allowing the U.S. health secretary to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies on behalf of Medicare's 48 million beneficiaries to lower the cost of prescription drugs would mean big savings for Medicare and the federal government! These savings should be used to further extend the life of the Medicare trust fund.

✓ **Requiring drug manufacturers to extend drug rebates from the Medicaid program to people eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare would save \$135 billion over ten years!** Currently, the federal government receives a set rebate from prescription drug makers for purchases it makes for a Medicaid patient. That rebate is lost, however, if the patient is also on Medicare. Applying the Medicaid rebates to the drug purchases by low-income Medicare beneficiaries could save the government \$135 billion over ten years.

✓ **Ending the Bush tax cuts in 2012 for the richest 2% (individuals making more than \$200,000 a year, couples making \$250,000) brings \$866 billion in savings!** Additionally, limiting deductions and exclusions for couples making more than \$250,000 a year would bring savings of \$410 billion!

✓ **Requiring a minor financial transactions tax of 0.25% on certain financial-market transactions such as the sale of stocks, bonds, options, or futures would raise \$1 trillion in revenue in the next decade!** Such a tax would have the added bonus of discouraging the very sort of financial speculation that crashed the housing market and the 401(k)s of many Americans.





On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, President Obama signed into law the Budget Control Act of 2011 (also known as the “Debt Deal”). This Act was a compromise negotiated between the Administration and Congressional leaders to raise the debt ceiling by \$2.4 trillion, allowing the federal government to continue to fund its obligations through 2012.

As part of this agreement, Congress is required to vote on a balanced budget amendment (BBA) to the Constitution between October 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011. Passage requires approval by two-thirds of each chamber and three-quarters of state legislatures (38 states).

As of October 1, no single, specific BBA has been identified as *the* one that Congress will vote on to fulfill this requirement. This past summer, however, the Republican-controlled House indicated its willingness to enact measures that would cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid when it passed the “Cut, Cap and Balance” bill. This bill required Congress to pass one of the following proposed BBAs: H.J. Res 1, S.J. Res 10, and H.J. Res 56. While “Cut, Cap and Balance” did not pass the Senate, these proposed BBAs may provide a preview of what Congress may vote on.

For instance, H.J. Res. 1 would cap government expenditures at 18% of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2018. To meet this threshold, Congress would have to make extreme budget cuts. Among other things, these cuts would include (1) adopting Representative Paul Ryan’s voucher plan to privatize Medicare; (2) raising the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67; and (3) raising the Social Security retirement age to 70. By 2021, such a budget would have *reduced the following programs in half*: Medicaid; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps), and Supplemental Security Income.

Most of the proposals require approval of either 3/5ths or 2/3rds of Congress to raise taxes (revenue). Such high a threshold will make it virtually impossible to raise taxes, which means that meeting a balanced budget requirement would mandate severe program cuts and **jeopardize all federal programs, including Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid**. Only defense spending during times of war or military conflict would be exempt from cuts.

**The BBAs are designed to protect the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy while balancing the budget on the backs of seniors and the middle class.**

The BBA proposals do not make exceptions for unforeseen emergencies, like hurricanes or floods, or economic downturns and could further harm a weakened economy. During an economic slump, government expenditures increase in the form of payments for unemployment insurance, food stamps and Medicaid. These “automatic stabilizers” can turn budget surpluses into deficits. A BBA effectively suspends the automatic stabilizers by requiring them to be offset with cuts in federal spending or tax increases, neither of which are advisable during a recession.



## What Should I Tell My Friends about a Balanced Budget Amendment?

### **A balanced budget amendment would result in severe cuts to Medicare!**

- It would raise the Medicare eligibility age to 67, voucherize the program and impose even deeper cuts than the Ryan budget.

### **A balanced budget amendment would result in severe cuts to Social Security!**

- It would raise the retirement age to 70.
- Because the BBA would require that spending in any year be offset by revenues collected *in the same year*, Social Security could not use its reserves to pay benefits – even if it had balances in its trust fund, as it does today. Instead, it would be forced to cut benefit for millions of Americans.

### **A balanced budget amendment would gut Medicaid and diminish low-income programs!**

- The BBA would reduce the federal Medicaid contributions to states, thereby shifting costs on to the states, providers and Medicaid beneficiaries and seriously jeopardize nursing home and home care services for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- By 2021, programs like Medicaid, food stamps and SSI would be cut in half.

### **A balanced budget amendment is bad for the economy!**

- By requiring a balanced budget every year, no matter how the economy was performing, the BBA would force cuts in vital programs and spending JUST when the economy is weak or in recession - just the opposite of good economic policy.

## Where can I find out more?

Center for Budget and Policy Priorities:

- <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3509>
- <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3537>

Economic Policy Institute:

- [http://www.epi.org/analysis\\_and\\_opinion/entry/house\\_18\\_spending\\_cap\\_is\\_as\\_bad\\_and\\_infeasible\\_a\\_policy\\_as\\_the\\_senates/](http://www.epi.org/analysis_and_opinion/entry/house_18_spending_cap_is_as_bad_and_infeasible_a_policy_as_the_senates/) 092811





## Lobbying Talking Points

### Beginning the Visit:

- If you are a large group, the person selected to open the meeting should identify herself or himself and ask the staff to identify themselves and their areas of responsibility. Comments should be directed to the Representative or Senator, if present. Wherever appropriate, those attending should tell personal stories that relate to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and long term care.
- Explain that you are there to talk about the Super Committee and the need to protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.
- Explain the background of the Alliance, how you are a member and ask them to visit the Alliance's website at [www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org) for more information about the Alliance.

### What to Tell the Special Committee & Congress:



#### Hands off Social Security!

- Social Security does not contribute a penny to the federal deficit.
- Social Security's long-term funding shortfall is decades away and should be addressed separately from the Super Committee's negotiations.
- We oppose changing to the chained CPI to calculate Social Security's cost-of living adjustments! The chained CPI would mean an immediate benefit cut for today's retirees!
- We oppose raising the retirement age! It's already rising to 67 for the next generation of retirees. Pushing it even higher puts retirement out of reach for the middle class and our children and grandchildren.
- Raising the payroll tax cap! If the cap on the payroll tax contributions paid by workers and employers were eliminated so that all wages above \$106,800 were taxed, Social Security's long-term funding gap would be totally eliminated!
- We oppose means-testing Social Security. Means-testing benefits would undermine the insurance nature of the program: Recipients have an earned right to their retirement benefits. Breaking this link between earnings and benefits would undermine the very support the program needs for its continued success.





## **Protect Medicare! No Cuts! Any Medicare Savings Should Be Used for Medicare – Not to Reduce the Deficit!**

- We oppose raising the age of Medicare eligibility from 65 to 67! These individuals are the most difficult to insure, as a result of their age and chronic conditions.
- We oppose proposals that shift costs on to seniors! We oppose using a single deductible for Medicare, restricting first dollar coverage under Medigap or requiring co-pays for home health. These things will do nothing to reduce the cost for health care for seniors and will shift costs on to those who can least afford it.
- Any savings that are found in Medicare should be put back into the Medicare!
- Hands off our Medicare! Do NOT privatize Medicare! The so-called stipend will not be enough to cover health care costs and will leave seniors at the mercy of insurance companies.



## **Congress should not balance the budget on the backs of Medicaid beneficiaries!**

- We oppose cuts to Medicaid, a program that assist seniors and low-income population. Especially when there are tax cuts still being given to the wealthy!
- The Committee and Congress should not support proposals that would reduce funding to Medicaid by changing its formula either through block granting or a blended rate. Such proposals would merely shift costs on to the state, and ultimately affect the benefits of Medicaid beneficiaries, including seniors who rely on the program for nursing home care.



## **Congress Should Reject a Balanced Budget Amendment**

- A balanced budget amendment would revert spending back to the 1960s level and is unrealistic today.
- Capping spending at 18% of the gross domestic product (GDP), as the BBA requires, would entail severe cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

### **Ending the Visit:**

Thank them for their time and drop off your materials.

