



Let's Not Be the Last Generation to Retire!

Lobby Week

February 18-22, 2013



The APWU Retirees Department is an affiliate of the Alliance for Retired Americans.



President
Barbara J. Easterling

Secretary-Treasurer
Ruben Burks

February 2013

Dear Alliance Activists:

This year our key issues of Social Security and Medicare will again be subject to the spotlight in Congress. Attacks could come from several sources such as the House budget proposal this spring, from debt debates, and from attempts to reduce defense cuts in the upcoming sequester debate.

This Presidents' Day recess presents a great opportunity to tell members of Congress and their staffs that the Alliance is here and watching what they do. During the week of February 18-24th, both the House and Senate will be in recess, and we are asking you to lobby them. As the debt reduction debates continue in Congress, many members of Congress are continuing to call for cuts to our core programs like Social Security and Medicare and have been spreading myths and outright lies focusing on seniors. They are using scare tactics and making outrageous statements that Social Security is bankrupt and that Medicare costs are driving up the deficit. Enclosed is a copy of our toolkit, which I hope you will find useful for your visits.

During the coming weeks, let's separate fact from fiction and tell Congress:

- **Social Security is sound.** It has a surplus and can pay benefits through 2033. Let's make it stronger by raising the earnings cap and adopting a COLA like the CPI-E that reflects the true cost of living for seniors, rather than instituting the chained CPI, which is an immediate benefit cut to all beneficiaries.
- **No raising of Medicare age or further means testing of benefits.** Both means testing and raising the Medicare eligibility age do nothing to reduce the rising costs of health care and, instead, shift costs on to beneficiaries.
- **Require Big Pharma to pay their fair share** Medicare should not be on the chopping block, while drug companies continue to reap huge windfalls. Drug companies should be required to provide the government discounts for low-income Medicare beneficiaries, like they do for veterans and low-income, Medicaid beneficiaries.

We have a unique opportunity in the coming weeks to make our hard work payoff. Join with your fellow Alliance activists and tell your members of Congress we're watching what they do. This toolkit should provide you with all the information you need to set up and conduct strategic lobby visits. If you need additional information please don't hesitate to reach out to us. Thank you for your continued activism.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Coyle".

Edward F. Coyle, Executive Director

Presidents' Day Recess Lobby Visits

Goals

The Alliance will continue to define sides in the budget debate by creating an accountability environment on who supports seniors and who wants to cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid in order to continue to give tax breaks to corporate America and the wealthiest 2%:

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, and 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”
2. Focus on raising additional revenue from the 2% and corporate America,
3. Block any Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid cuts in Congress
4. Discredit the idea of a COLA cut (chained CPI) for this and future debates about Social Security
5. Discredit the idea that the current coverage levels of Medicare and Medicaid are sufficient to meet seniors (especially low-income) needs
6. 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
7. Significantly increase media coverage promoting the idea that Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are base level safety nets that allow an avenue for seniors to live with dignity and some level of economic security.

Strategies

1. Do fewer, more priority visits, lowering the overall quantity but improving the quality of visits with the expectations below.
2. Visits will fit into of these 4 themes:
 - a. For Champions of our issues: Thanking them for past support and asking them to remain strong on our issues.
 - b. For new members of Congress: Introduction to the Alliance and our issues stressing the importance of opposing cuts to Medicare, Social Security and Medicaid
 - c. For moderate Members who may be on the fence: Asking them to hold the line on retirement security and not give into pressure to cut programs seniors depend on
 - d. For Members who consistently oppose our issues: consider holding an action or press conference event to deliver petition signatures and define our opposition
3. Deliver petitions to Members of Congress signed by Alliance members and activists in their district who do not want to be a part of the last generation to retire.
4. Convey to priority Members of Congress that seniors across the political spectrum – Republicans, Democrats and Independents – oppose damaging changes to Social Security and Medicare.
5. Educate priority members on Social Security and Medicare solvency and the dangers of raising the retirement age and other benefit cuts.
6. Show that seniors in that state or district agree with our positions on Social Security and Medicare.
7. Make sure meeting participants go into the meeting informed on the member's previous statements on Social Security and Medicare.

What's Our Message?

Lobby Week Talking Points

There is much already in the news about deficit reduction and the need to put “everything on the table” including cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Alliance Lobby Week is an opportunity to let our members of Congress know where we stand on these issues and want to work with them on a regular basis to achieve full retirement security for all seniors. Share the following important talking points with Alliance members that will be speaking at your lobby meetings:

Medicare and Medicaid

- Do NOT raise the age of Medicare eligibility. Raising the Medicare age does nothing to reduce the rising costs of health care and, instead, shifts costs on to seniors, employers and the states. Seniors 65 and 66 years old, who will be forced to buy insurance on the private exchanges, as well as seniors who are on Medicare will see a 3 percent increase in their premiums. This is equivalent to \$141 per enrollee in 2014.
- Do NOT means test Medicare any further. Medicare Part B and Part D are already means tested. To achieve significant savings, 25% of beneficiaries would have to be means-tested, which means seniors with incomes above \$47,000 would be affected.
- Do allow the government to negotiate better drug prices under Medicare.
- Do require drug companies to provide discounts for low-income Medicare beneficiaries as they provide veterans and low-income, Medicaid beneficiaries.
- Stop Medicaid cuts and don't turn it into a block grant program. Millions of seniors rely on this program for their long term care.

Alliance's position on Medicare:

- We oppose raising the Medicare eligibility age, which would shift costs to beneficiaries.
- We oppose further means testing, as further means testing would affect middle income seniors.
- We oppose proposals such as the Medigap surcharge, home health copays or the Medicare redesign that shift costs to beneficiaries but do not address rising health costs.
- We support closing drug company loopholes. Medicare benefits should not be cut, while greedy drug companies continue to reap huge windfalls.
- The federal government should be able to negotiate and obtain better drug prices for Medicare beneficiaries.

Social Security

- We must not balance the budget on the backs of retirees. Social Security did not create our nation's fiscal problems, nor should it be used to fix them. The current debt situation should not be political cover for attacking Social Security.
- Social Security is a self-financed, fully funded program and any reduction in it does nothing to address the shortfall in the rest of the federal budget.
- We care about the legacy we leave for future generations. But the fact is that Social Security has not added one penny to our budget deficit. The program is fully-financed by worker and employer contributions. In fact, Social Security has a \$2.7 trillion surplus.
- Social Security has enough funds to pay full benefits through 2033. Even then, without any changes, the system will be able to pay 75 percent of benefits.
- The chained CPI is an immediate benefit cut. It's not just a simple technical change without any impact – it's a real cut to the benefits that have been earned throughout one's working life.
- Cutting benefits and raising the retirement age will result in extreme economic hardship for current and future retirees. The proposal is an attack on middle class Americans.
- Raising the earnings cap on Social Security contributions would go a long way to keeping Social Security safe and sound. President Obama endorsed raising the caps during the campaign.
- Support the CPI-E COLA formula to better reflect seniors' needs.
- Social Security is based on a promise: If you pay into the system then you earn your guaranteed benefits. This is one promise that politicians should not break.

Alliance's position on Social Security:

- Do not cut the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA); instead, change it to the more accurate CPI-E
- Do not raise the retirement age
- Do not cut benefits
- Make Social Security solvent so it can pay out 100% of promised benefits after 2033 such as raising the earnings cap so that income above \$113,700 is taxed.

Scheduling Visits

Here are a few tips when working to set up meetings with your legislators:

Early Bird Gets the Worm! Scheduling meetings with members of Congress, especially when they are home for a brief recess, can be very difficult because of the competition for their time. You should start the process as soon as possible.

Relationships are important! Identify an Alliance member from the legislator's home district who has a relationship with the Member of Congress to schedule the appointment and keep that person as the point for all communication with the office.

Constituents Get Priority! Stress when you are scheduling the visit that you are bringing seniors from the legislator's home district to speak about issues in their community. Ideally, have a constituent make the call to schedule the appointment.

Don't Be Discouraged! Sometimes it can be difficult to connect with the legislative office. Try to be patient but persistent by leaving a phone message request and following that up with a formal request through fax and/or email. If you still do not get a response, identify an Alliance member who is a donor or has an established relationship with the legislator to make the connection.

Double Check Your Date! Call the office a couple days before the meeting to ensure you are confirmed on the calendar.

Preparation is Key! Even if you are bringing experienced activists to the visit, you should ask everyone to come at least a half hour before the appointment and meet in an easy to find place. This time should be used to reiterate everyone's roles in the meeting, to review the key issues and asks and to talk about the legislator's voting record.

Talk About What Happened! As you exit the legislator's office, make sure to take at least 15 minutes to debrief with the members who attended the meeting to discuss what everyone heard in the meeting and identify next steps. Thank your members for attending the visit.

Thank You! Saying thank you is one more way to connect with your legislator and reiterate your asks. Identify a follow-up point person to send a thank you letter and to respond to any information requests that came up during the meeting.

If you have questions about setting up visits or need help, please call Rich Fiesta at 202-637-5271 or email Rfiesta@retiredamericans.org.

Involving Your Members

Alliance Lobby Week is a great time to engage your members across the state, grow their understanding of the legislative and lobby process, and increase their interest in participating in advocacy in the future on key issues, and to show value in their membership with you. Here are some suggestions during and after lobby week of ways to engage and to grow your active membership:

1. Get commitments of participation from your members across the state.
2. Contact Activists who participated in the Activist Briefing Call who indicated they would like to participate in Lobby Week and invite them to participate. In addition, if there are other activists you've recently ID'd through electoral work this fall or the Lane Duck session, invite them to join you. If you need the list of activists in your state contact Peter Witzler at 202-637-5272 or pwitzler@retiredamericans.org
3. Ask Alliance members in the elected official's district to attend the lobby meeting with that legislator. Ask a few new members to attend.
4. Identify Alliance members to take leadership roles in the meeting.
5. Hold a press event to kick off or close out Alliance Lobby Week where a larger number of your members can participate. Identify a number of people who can tell a personal story about Medicare and/or health care to the press.
6. Bring Alliance t-shirts for your members to wear to the meeting and record the visits with a camera, emailing or mailing photos to the DC office.
7. Encourage your members to write letters to the editor, especially in congressional districts where you are meeting with legislators. Use the February 12th State of the Union as a opportunity to respond to recent news articles on our issues.
8. Organize calls into the offices of elected officials during Alliance Lobby Week to reiterate your issue and engage members who cannot attend the visits.
9. Engage your members in internet and web-based advocacy in partnership with national.
10. Thank your members for visiting their elected officials during Alliance Lobby Week and ask them to participate in a report back meeting.
11. Hold a larger membership meeting after Alliance Lobby Week, inviting your affiliates, where members who attended lobby visits report back about their experience, what the elected official said, and next steps.
12. Send a letter to your affiliates to also report back on the lobby visits and ask them to get involved in a follow-up action.
12. Strategize with your Board of Directors about follow-up action.

How to Structure Your Agenda

Here is a sample agenda for your Alliance meeting with your policy makers:

1. Identify Yourself and the Group You Represent.

Make sure the elected official knows who is in the room, and is clear about the Alliance's electoral power in the legislator's district. Leave with the legislator an information packet about the organization and your key asks.

2. Show support for Alliance issues and our grassroots power

You will be receiving petitions signed by Alliance members and activists in your state. Deliver the petitions during your meeting to show the support for our issues and our grassroots power in their district.

3. Get the Meeting Started – Be Aware of the Time!

Meetings usually run not more than 45 minutes. Make sure you are aware of your meeting start and end times. After introductions, begin with a word about why you wanted to meet with the Member and what you hope to gain from the meeting.

4. State Your Position Clearly.

Tell the elected official the key facts on your issue, being sensitive to what this particular legislator is interested in. Be clear and specific about what your position is on the issue. For example, do not just ask that the official to support Medicare. Ask them to support a specific bill or change to Medicare.

5. Get the Elected Official to Take Action.

Ask specific questions including how your elected official stands on your issue. Ask for a clear position on your issue, and do not give up until you have an unmistakable “yes” or “no.” If the legislator is supporting you, ask for a specific action in support – such as introducing legislation, cosponsoring legislation, or holding a press conference with Alliance members.

6. Leave Behind Additional Information.

Leave information that gives more details on your issue, reminds the legislator of your meeting and provides your contact information. Mention the Alliance website, www.retiredamericans.org, and how to find us on Facebook.

7. Follow Up.

Write letters thanking the elected officials for their time and reminding them of commitments made to you during the meetings. Include any additional information they requested in the meetings. A sample letter is attached.

8. Debrief.

Talk about how your meetings went, come to agreement on the minutes and what happened in the meeting,

Key Lobby Visit Roles

While not everyone on a lobby/advocacy visit needs to speak or have a specific role, before the meeting, you should identify four people to fill the following roles:

Facilitator

This person leads the meeting and controls the agenda. The facilitator makes sure the meeting runs smoothly and that your group hits all of your agenda points in the time allotted. If the legislator has a question, the facilitator decides who will answer the question.

Always respect the facilitator and each other, and do not interrupt!

Timekeeper

This person helps the facilitator stay focused and on schedule. The organizer serves as timekeeper and is the only person that should communicate with the facilitator during the meeting.

Note Taker

This person is in charge of taking notes during the meeting. You need an accurate account of what was said so that others working in your organization will know the outcome of the meeting. It is also important to keep track of commitments made by you or by the elected official.

Witness

This person is ideally directly affected by the issue you are there to talk about, and has a compelling story to tell. Witnesses are the heart of your meeting, because they bring a face and a name to your cause. Try to have at least one person who can talk personally about the issue.

Sample Informational Packet for Members of Congress

Many advocacy organizations leave their members of Congress with a packet of information about their organization, along with important information regarding their key issues after a lobby visit. We suggest that for each member of Congress you meet with during Lobby Week, you leave a folder of information.

Possible inclusions:

- One page fact sheet about your state Alliance
- Fact sheets and issue briefs from the Alliance for Retired Americans
- A copy of the latest “Friday Alert”
- The latest copy of your state newsletter
- Contact information of your state leadership
- Flyers or other information on upcoming Alliance events in your area

Sample State Alliance Fact Sheet



The Alliance for Retired Americans is a nationwide grassroots organization representing over 4 million retirees and 33 State Affiliate organizations that advocates on behalf of America's seniors.

Our mission is to advance public policy that protects the health and economic security of older Americans.

Our goal is to educate, energize and mobilize seniors to make a difference through activism.

Leadership: President – Barbara Easterling;

Secretary-Treasurer – Ruben Burks;

Executive Director – Edward F. Coyle.

To learn more about the Alliance and become involved in our mission to protect the health and economic security of older Americans, visit our website at www.retiredamericans.org, join us on Facebook at www.fb.com/retiredamericans, or contact us toll free at 1-888-373-6497.

The (STATE) Alliance for Retired Americans

[STATE LOGO]

is the state affiliate of the Alliance,

Representing ____ retirees and over ____ affiliated organizations.

Our mission is to advocate for progressive policies that ensure just and equitable living conditions for seniors both in [STATE] and across the nation.

Our goal is to create a statewide network of organizations that represent retired union members, senior and community activists and their families who work in coalition to educate and inform the membership, the public, and elected officials about issues that affect the well-being of (INSERT STATE) seniors.

Leadership: President – _____;

To learn more about you can get involved with the (STATE) Alliance for Retired Americans, please contact us at _____ or email _____.

Lobby Preparation

Roles

a) Facilitator: _____

b) Organizer: _____

c) Note Taker: _____

d) Witness: _____

Identifying Your Electoral Power

How many people do you represent in the state? _____

How many people do you represent in the legislator's district? (Need help figuring out this number? Please contact Juan Johnson at 202-637-5288 and he can tell you how many national Alliance members reside in your state / CD) _____

What is the list of organizations that make up your coalition?

Your Goals for the Meeting

What are the 3 points of your message that you want to convey to the elected official?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

What do you want the legislator to agree to in the meeting?

Suggested Lobby Visit Agenda

1. New Members or their district staff are given introductory materials on the Alliance, including information regarding the state Alliance.
2. Incumbents can be reminded of the Alliance structure as appropriate.
3. Deliver petitions signed by alliance members and activists in their district to Member or their staff.
4. Member or staff are told of polling that shows support of the current structure of Social Security and Medicare across the political spectrum (included in talking points and leave behind)
5. Member or their staff are given a quick overview of the Alliance's key points on Social Security and Medicare, (full explanation of points on documents in leave-behind folder):
 - a. Social Security solvency through 2033, small changes would extend solvency for decades.
 - b. Social Security has not created our national debt.
 - c. Problems with raising the retirement age.
 - d. One way toward solvency is raising the earnings cap.
 - e. Change the COLA to the CPI-E, instead of the flawed chained CPI.
 - f. Raising the age of Medicare eligibility or further means testing benefits would shift costs to beneficiaries.
 - g. Drug companies' tax loopholes should be on the table.
6. Participant with Social Security story gives a brief version of it.
7. Member or their district staff are asked the member's position preserving these key elements of Social Security and Medicare.
8. Participants establish a timeline for both parties to follow up with the member's district or DC office on outstanding issues, including any additional information requested from either the member or asked of the Alliance.
9. If the member of Congress is present at the meeting, be sure to get a picture with them and your group.

Media Work Around Your Visits

1. Photographs

We encourage you to take pictures at your meeting and/or outside of the congressional office. These can be very useful to share with your members, post on your website or Facebook page, or use in a future publication. The national Communications department maintains a collection of Alliance photos, so please send us a copy at: ARAcommunications@retiredamericans.org.

2. Sample Letters to Editor for Your Local Newspaper

Recently members of the [state] Alliance for Retired Americans met with [Member's office] to discuss the facts and importance of Social Security and Medicare for seniors and others in our community. We heard [content of meeting]. We hope seniors and others will let [Member] know [e.g. how much we appreciate their support; that Congress should keep their hands off Social Security].

Social Security and Medicare are great American success stories – they help millions of retirees afford to pay their bills and stay healthy. We must keep these programs strong for generations to come. Let's all let Congress know that current and future retirees are counting on them!

~

As a retiree, I get nervous whenever I hear some in Congress talk about cutting Social Security and Medicare.

To me, our nation's fiscal problems are not caused by Medicare or Social Security, they are caused by the outrageous tax breaks we give to the wealthy and to big corporations. We also put two unfunded wars onto the nation's credit card. And then we ask those who did the least to cause these problems to be the ones to pay to clean it up.

Until we have more fairness in our tax code, Social Security and Medicare will always be at risk. We should not ask current and future retirees to pay the price for budget deficits we did not cause.

~

As a retiree, I am worried about talk in Washington to cut Social Security and Medicare to lower the budget deficit. Medicare and Social Security are not hand-outs. They are how our nation keeps its promise to hard-working men and women who paid Medicare and Social Security taxes in every paycheck they ever earned.

In my opinion, when politicians target Medicare and Social Security, it's usually because they are trying to protect the big tax breaks they want for millionaires and big business.

Retirees and workers need to keep a close eye on some people's ideas on how to lower our federal deficit.

~

We all want to have a lower budget deficit, but I don't think enough people know that Social Security does not add a penny to our national 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 and two long wars that were put onto the nation's credit card.

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 [name of state] are able to get by. Before we had Social Security, many people had to work until the day they died. Yes, we need to cut spending, but punishing people who paid Social Security taxes all their lives is the wrong way to do it.

Sample Letters to the Editor continued

As a retired_____, I get very upset when I hear politicians or TV commentators talk about how we should cut Social Security benefits. Easy for them to say – maybe they have trust funds that the rest of us don't.

Working men and women paid for their Social Security through taxes that came out of every pay check of their lives, so it has nothing to do with our budget deficit. Our government must honor its commitment to workers, and if we want to lower the deficit, let's instead take away all those tax breaks for millionaires and big corporations.

I worry about people who are my children and grandchildren's age. They are having a hard time of it now, so what will it be like for them when they retire? They'll definitely need Social Security, so let's make sure the politicians don't take it away.

~

When politicians in Washington talk about cutting spending, they act like Social Security is a hand-out or a give-away. As a retiree, let me tell you - we paid for it in taxes every day we worked.

I know we need to lower the budget deficit, but to me we should start with corporate tax breaks people don't need, and not the Social Security that we have worked hard for all our lives.

~

As a retired_____, I am worried that some politicians want to 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.

~

Retirees here in [state or area] need to pay close attention to politicians who want to 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 [state or area] 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.

~

There is talk in Washington of a new round of budget cuts. I hope they don't cut Medicaid, which is the only way most seniors are able to afford the cost of nursing home and long-term care.

I mention this so when seniors and people of all ages hear talk in Washington and in [name of state capital] about cutting Medicaid, they will have a better sense of how this would impact their families. Call me old school, but to me a compassionate nation doesn't turn its back on seniors in nursing homes just so we can have more tax breaks for millionaires and big corporations.

Sample Guest Column

Budget Battles in DC... Seems Like They Never End!

by _____

It seems like every time you turn on the news there is another budget battle, another budget crisis in Washington. There is one thing that all these budget fights have in common: politicians and TV commentators insisting we have no choice but to cut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. But this is not the truth. In fact, it would make much more sense to get rid of sweetheart tax deals for big business and for millionaires.

So, [name of state] seniors, brace yourself for yet another year of hearing about how we need to lower Social Security COLAs, raise the Social Security and Medicare eligibility ages, and cut Medicaid spending. But please don't believe the hype.

For many retirees here in [name of state], these programs are the only way they are able to stay healthy and pay their bills. Social Security helps [number from SSW report] seniors in our state, benefits these retirees paid for out of every paycheck they ever earned. Medicare helps us see doctors and fill the prescriptions we need. Medicaid is how a large majority of middle-class families are able to afford long-term and nursing home care.

Instead of cutting these programs, there are ways to actually make them stronger. We could strengthen the Social Security Trust Fund by having the highest income earners pay their fair share in taxes. Right now a millionaire pays almost the same amount of Social Security payroll taxes as a middle class worker. We can save Medicare millions by ending a Bush-era loophole that prohibits Medicare from negotiating volume discounts from the big drug companies. Savvy seniors know you can save money when you buy in bulk.

While it gets tempting to just tune out these seemingly never-ending budget battles, please don't. The stakes are too high for both today's seniors and our children and grandchildren.

Instead, become a politician's worst nightmare: a politically savvy senior who knows the truth about these issues, who educates their friends and neighbors, and who makes their voice not just on Election Day, but every day!

[name] is [title] of the [name of chapter] Alliance for Retired Americans. For more information [phone, e-mail, web?]

Social Media

Use social and new media tools to amplify your voice and spread the word about your in-state/in-district actions.

- Post an update and/or photo on Facebook of your lobby group and share what you are meeting about and pushing for!
- Use Twitter to influence candidates, elected officials and reporters. While many of your members may not be on Twitter, it is a great tool for reaching local reporters, progressive bloggers and politicians. If you have a Twitter account, tweet about your issues, lobbying stops and use popular “hashtags” in your post so your tweets are seen more broadly. Did an elected official say something outrageous to you? Respond via Twitter or highlight the comments for your followers and tweet at local reporters so they know what your representative said. During lobby visits, you can also send out live updates and photos through Twitter.

Suggested hashtags:

#SocialSecurity

#Medicare

#Medicaid

#p2: progressive

Twitter abbreviations:

RT = Retweet

MT = Modified tweet (if you had to edit a tweet to share with your followers, use this.)

Sample tweets or Facebook messages:

- ▶ Retiree Power! Today, [#] [state] Alliance members meet with [Rep X.] to talk about #Social Security, #Medicare, #Medicaid
- ▶ [Medicaid/Medicare/Social Security] is important to me because _____. [Rep. X], don't cut it to pay for tax cuts for the rich! #p2
- ▶ We need more economic security not less. [Congress person X—use their Twitter handle or “tag” in Facebook post], promise me you won't cut #Social Security, #Medicare or #Medicaid! #1u #p2
- ▶ [Congress person X—use their Twitter Handle or “tag” in Facebook post], we still need your support! Will you protect #Medicare #SocialSecurity #Medicaid?

Timeline

Feb 1st—17th: Contact your members of Congress to set up in-district meetings

Feb 18th—22nd : National Lobby Week

Feb: 27th—29th: Send lobby report back forms to National Alliance

After The Meetings

- ☐ Please mail/fax/email your Lobby Report Back Form to the Alliance Washington office before Wednesday, February 29th, 2013. **Fax to (202) 637-5398**, email to **Araorganizing@retiredamericans.org**, or mail to 815 16th Street NW, 4th Floor, Washington DC 20006).
- ☐ Send a thank you note to the legislator and to your members who attended.
- ☐ Respond to any follow-up questions or request from the legislator in a timely manner.
- ☐ Identify members to write letters to the editor about our issues and our members' engagement in the political process.
- ☐ Update national Alliance staff on the progress of the meeting and send any photos that you took of your Alliance Lobby Week activities.
- ☐ Hold the legislators accountable to any commitments they made during the visit. Track legislation that you asked the elected official to support and follow-up with letters, phone calls and visits if they have not acted on the legislation.
- ☐ Keep your members involved by sending them the Friday Alert and additional information about upcoming legislation and actions to forward that legislation.

LOBBY REPORT BACK FORM

(Please submit back to the National Alliance)

Member's office visited: _____

Member or staff in visit: _____

Participants in meeting and their roles: _____

Member's or staff's response to Alliance talking points, personal stories:

Raise Retirement Age for both programs:

Cut COLA/CPI-E Change:

Cut Benefits for both programs:

Raise earnings cap:

Ryan Plan:

Means Testing for both programs:

Follow-up commitments from the member's office (with timeline):

Follow-up commitments from the Alliance participants (with timeline):

Any follow-up needs from the national Alliance: _____

Please submit via fax to 202-637-5398 or

via email to: araorganizing@retiredamericans.org by February 29th, 2013.

Your reports help our Government and Political Affairs Department lobby more strategically in DC.

Sample Thank You Letter

Sending a thank you note after your lobby visit allows you to reiterate your positions and to provide responses to questions raised at the meeting. Ideally, an Alliance leader and/or constituent who spoke during the lobby visit will hand write the thank you note. Below is an example language you can use for a thank you note:

Dear Representative _____,

On behalf of the State Alliance, thank you for meeting with us on (insert date) about the importance of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. As a member of your home district, I see seniors who are struggling every day to afford health care, housing and food. Medicare and Social Security are critical programs that must be preserved and strengthened, not by privatization, but by improvements such as (insert one or two of your policy asks).

As you recall, we shared that [a very brief summary of what you presented]. We were interested to hear [put in writing what you heard from the Member and/or their staff].

As promised, attached is the information on the question you raised on [topic]. We look forward to hearing back from your office regarding [topic].

I also wanted to follow-up with you on the question you asked us about _____ (respond to any questions or concerns the elected official had).

We appreciate your interest in retiree issues and hope you will defend Social Security and other senior issues in the 113th Congress and beyond. If you have any further questions, please contact [Alliance staffer or state Alliance leadership].

Sincerely,

Name

State Alliance Member