



# Illinois Alliance *for* Retired Americans

## 2011 Mid-Year Newsletter

### Free rides pass To end for many seniors



On September 1, the Senior Free Ride pass for CTA, Metra and Pace will end for many seniors. Only those 65 or older who have an income less than \$27,610 are eligible for a free ride pass.

In order to receive a new Senior Free Ride card, you must submit an IL-1363 application and be approved for Circuit Breaker before the end of the year. The current cards cannot be used after September 1. For questions, call the Illinois Department on Aging Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966.

### Seniors Rally to Save Social Security

In May, over 100 seniors joined Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky and expert Eric Kingson in Chicago for a rally to send a clear message to Illinois' congressional delegation to keep their hands off Social Security.

Eric Kingson, Co-Director of Social Security Works and former policy advisor to two presidential commissions (1982 National Commission on Social Security Reform, 1994 Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform) said "Long-time opponents of Social Security are using the threat of the federal deficit to demand cuts to the program. Social Security has served working families well

### Seniors Protest Congressman Paul Ryan's Roadmap to Ruin

Over 150 concerned citizens, people with disabilities and members of the Illinois Alliance protested outside of the Palmer House in May in Chicago while Congressman Paul Ryan spoke inside to the Economic Club of Chicago to promote his plan to privatize Medicare, gut Medicaid and fast-track cuts to Social Security.

Protestors chanted "Hands off Social Security and Medicare" and listened to speakers, including Katie Jordan, Treasurer of the Illinois Alliance. Jordan said "It is irresponsible and unnecessary to talk about radically changing Medicare and Social Security. These programs keep our most vulnerable people from falling into poverty. It is not another stock in your portfolio."

Congressman Paul Ryan's budget passed out of the U.S. House, but did not receive enough votes in the U.S. Senate, however, the debate continues over cuts to the federal budget. Congress must vote to raise the federal debt ceiling by August 2 and conservatives are demanding drastic cuts to America's safety net programs before voting to raise the ceiling. The Alliance for Retired Americans is taking action across the country to stop any efforts to cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.



and is needed to protect all of us from a significant decline in income in the face of disability, death or retirement."

The event also included a panel of Social Security beneficiaries who shared their stories about how the program has impacted their lives. Eleanor Rapp, member of the Illinois Alliance, said "After my husband passed away, I would not have been able to raise my two teenage sons without the extra help from Social Security."



Rep. Schakowsky addresses the crowd at the rally.



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### Illinois Cares Rx Still Stands

Despite Governor Quinn's proposal to eliminate Illinois Cares Rx, the Illinois General Assembly passed a budget that includes funding for the program. Although the funding was cut approximately in half, Illinois Cares Rx is still standing. Because of the reduced funding the following changes will be made to the program.

- 1.) Beginning September 1 enrollees must have an income equal to or less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. This will result in approximately 30,000 people being removed from the program.
- 2.) The co-payments will be changed. These co-payments were not set in the budget and a rule-making process may change these amounts.
  - a. \$5.00 for generics
  - b. \$15 for preferred brand named drugs
  - c. \$20 for non-preferred brand named drugs
  - d. \$15 for specialty drugs
  - e. 25% cost share after \$2,850 in drug costs (doughnut hole coverage)
- 3.) The \$25 rebate option is eliminated.

The rest of Illinois Cares Rx remains in place and is expected to continue to pay premiums, deductibles and prescription drugs not covered by Medicare Part D.

The Circuit Breaker program, which includes a property tax grant and license plate discount, has not been changed.

Members of the Illinois Alliance worked to protect this crucial program by calling their state Legislators. Thanks to all of you that took action to prevent this program from being eliminated.

### Illinois Alliance Celebrates Anniversary of Affordable Care Act

Dr. Garth Graham, the Deputy Secretary for Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, spoke with members of the Illinois Alliance in Chicago in March at a party to celebrate the first anniversary of President Obama signing the Affordable Care Act. Dr. Graham

discussed how the Affordable Care Act benefits seniors, including:

**Cracking down on fraud.** Last year, the government recovered a record \$4 billion in health care fraud enforcement efforts.

**Lowering prescription drugs costs.** Seniors who hit the Medicare prescription drug 'donut hole' this year are eligible for \$1,500 in savings.

### Save the Date



#### Rally to Celebrate Medicare's 46<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Friday, July 22 at 11am-12pm  
Office of Congressman Aaron Schock  
100 NE Monroe, Peoria

#### Forum to Celebrate Social Security's 76<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Thursday, August 18 at 10am-12pm  
Machinist Local 660  
161 N Shamrock St, East Alton

#### Constitutional Convention

Friday, September 23 at 9am-3pm  
UAW Pat Greathouse Center  
1000 E Center St, Ottawa

#### Senior Power Lunch

Tuesday, October 18 at Noon  
Elks Lodge  
495 Lee St, Des Plaines



Members sing Happy Birthday to the Affordable Care Act

**Keeping seniors healthy.** The preventive benefits available in 2011 include a free annual wellness visit and screenings for bone density, diabetes and certain cancers.