President
Barbara J. Easterling

Secretary-Treasurer
Ruben Burks

November 3, 2009

Dear Representative,

The Alliance for Retired Americans, on behalf of its nearly four million members throughout the nation, supports the Affordable Health Care for America Act, H.R. 3962. We urge its prompt passage by the House of Representatives.

This legislation makes important, substantive, and positive changes in the health care needs of older Americans, none more important than Medicare improvements. The bill includes closing the Part D doughnut hole coverage gap, beginning in 2010. Medicare beneficiaries will immediately see that gap closed by $500 in addition to 50% price discounts for name brand drugs for seniors in that gap until it is fully closed. The elimination of copayments for Medicare preventive services is a major improvement for the health of seniors. In addition, the bill requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate drug prices on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries, a position long advocated by the Alliance. Furthermore, eliminating Medicare Advantage overpayments combined with new waste, fraud, and abuse protections will extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund. Companion legislation to H.R. 3692 will improve how physicians receive Medicare reimbursements, which gives great comfort to older Americans and their being able to keep their choice of doctor.

In addition to the Medicare improvements, several other provisions of H.R. 3962 benefit retirees and older Americans. Many Alliance members are not yet Medicare eligible and H.R. 3962 helps them as well. The provisions creating a reinsurance fund for retirees ages 55-64 as well as insurance reforms on age rating, the elimination of pre-existing conditions as a basis for denial of coverage, and the creation of an insurance exchange and a public health care plan option will all benefit pre-Medicare eligible retirees. The inclusion of CLASS Act provisions to provide a voluntary long term supports and services insurance program is a vital step forward in care for older Americans.

The Alliance for Retired Americans is committed to enacting legislation that improves the quality of life for retirees and all Americans. Passage of the Affordable Health Care for America Act will directly benefit our members and more than forty million older Americans. If we can be of assistance, please contact Richard Fiesta, Director of Government and Political Affairs, at the Alliance.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara J. Easterling President	Ruben Burks Secretary-Treasurer	Edward F. Coyle Executive Director

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