

August 29, 2022

WSARA Celebrated Passage of the IRA Bill with Senator Murray and Rep. Dr. Kim Schrier

WSARA President Jackie Boschok and Marianne Wilkins, RPEC Chapter 46 Vice-President, had the pleasure of celebrating President Biden's signing of the Inflation Reduction Act into law last week, in a press conference on August 23rd with Senator Patty Murray and Congresswoman Dr. Kim Schrier.



Left to right: Michael Byun - Asian Counseling Center Executive Director, Dr. Elizabeth Wako - Swedish Seattle Chief Executive, Senator Patty Murray, Representative Dr. Kim Schrier, Cathy MacCaul – AARP Advocacy Director, Jackie Boschok – WSARA President, Marianne Wilkins RPEC Chapter 46 VP (Screenshot from Senator Patty Murray's official website)

This victory for older Americans is especially sweet because it shows seniors defeating the pharmaceutical industry. Fortunately, the efforts of 4.4 million Alliance members across the nation and our allies overcame the efforts of the 1,600 lobbyists the pharmaceutical corporations employed in 2021.

The Inflation Reduction Act legislation was a long time coming. Alliance members have been fighting to allow Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug prices for two decades. Nationally, ARA members first took bus trips to Canada to obtain more affordable medications as far back as 2002. At that time, our own WSARA member Louise Parry organized several of these chartered bus trips from Seattle to Vancouver to purchase lower cost drugs there.



(Also, a screenshot from Senator Patty Murray's official website)

Jackie spoke about hearing from friends about seniors at the supermarket, having to leave food at the cash register so they could make ends meet. In a country as wealthy as the United States, no one should have to choose between taking medicine or putting food on the table. She called this legislation a game-changer, in that it will go a long way to help ensure retirees are not put in that terrible position.

Now we will see results. Five to seven million Medicare beneficiaries could see their prescription drug costs go down because of the provision allowing Medicare to negotiate prescription drug costs.

In addition, capping annual out-of-pocket drug spending at \$2,000 under Medicare Part D will eliminate a major source of anxiety for millions of seniors.

Jackie Boschok proudly exclaimed, “ I am a relatively healthy senior but need expensive eye drops to treat my dry eye condition. I look forward to being one of the more than 29,000 Medicare Part D enrollees in Washington State alone, who experienced out-of-pocket prescription drug costs over \$2,000 in 2021 that will now have those costs capped at \$2,000 per year.”

Marianne Wilkins prioritized this part of the Inflation Reduction Act as most impactful for her family, as well. Her husband takes Eliquis, one of the most common prescribed drugs in America today. The drug currently costs way less in Canada than here and is considered more effective than the older blood thinner drug. She agreed that action like this bill to lower drug costs was essential for those on a fixed income.

And nationally, 3.3 million Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes will benefit from a guarantee that their insulin costs are capped at \$35 for a month’s supply. Up until now, Americans have been paying the highest drug prices in the world, and one in four Americans has reported not taking at least one drug as prescribed because they couldn’t afford it.

Now that the Democrats in the U.S. House and Senate and Vice President Kamala Harris have voted, and President Biden has made this legislation the law of the land, we will see major improvements.

We will finally be putting seniors ahead of pharmaceutical corporations to deliver lower drug prices for the American people.

And the Inflation Reduction Act goes beyond drug prices. Another thing that it addresses is vaccines.

supporting the patients who relied on its implantable device. It does not seem concerned about investing in companies that are not able to continue to service innovations that Americans rely upon them.

Jazwinska asks why does our government allow companies to sell costly devices to Americans and then abandon them, especially when these devices are implanted into their bodies? At the very least, companies should be held accountable for doing so. Isn't it negligence or malpractice to leave these people in the lurch?

One solution would be to require these companies to make their proprietary devices open-source if they are discontinuing them. Other companies should be allowed to replicate them. Americans should not bear the burden of a company's inability to continue a valuable technology.

Want to Maintain Muscle? Frequency of Workouts Is Key



Whether the goal is bulging biceps or just a bit more strength and mass, a relatively light workout several times a week beats a more intense one done just once a week.

That's the conclusion of a small Australian [study](#) in which researchers spent a month tracking muscle-building progress among 36 college students.

"We have shown that a very small amount of exercise is still effective to increase [muscle strength](#)," as long as it's done frequently, said study author Ken Kazunori Nosaka, lead professor of exercise and sports science at Edith Cowan University in Joondalup, Australia.

"So we hope," he added, "that this would encourage people to start a daily exercise from a small amount. It is not difficult to find a time for daily muscle-strengthening exercise."

In a report published online recently in the [Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports](#), Nosaka and his colleagues noted that the World Health Organization and the American College of Sports Medicine both recommend doing muscle-strengthening activities at least twice a week — whether at home or at the gym — in order to maintain and improve fitness and health.

"However, many people do not meet this recommendation," Nosaka said. The main excuse: not enough time.

So the researchers decided to assess the potential of so-called "minimal exercise" among young, healthy adults.

They enlisted 24 men and 12 women for the month-long study, which focused on the impact of bicep contractions on both arm strength and size.

Before being assigned to one of three groups, none of the participants had engaged in any kind of resistance training of the arms for at least six months. Nosaka described the participants as "sedentary."

The first group performed six muscle contractions once per week. Exercises were performed on a machine designed to measure muscle strength, with measurements taken during the so-called "eccentric" portion of each bicep contraction — meaning the time spent slowly lowering a dumbbell during a curl.

The other two groups performed 30 such contractions a week. One group did six a day for five days each week, while another performed all the lifts in a single day.

In the end, the first group saw no strength or size benefit of any kind.

Those who did all 30 lifts on a single day fared better. As a group, they achieved a roughly 6% increase in muscle size, but no boost in muscle strength.

As it turned out, six lifts a day on five days of the week was the sweet spot, the findings showed.

These volunteers gained just as much size as the single-day group — plus a 10% increase in muscle strength, the researchers found.

Because the participants were relatively inactive before the study, Nosaka said the benefits they achieved from frequent moderate exercise would likely be greater than those for people who already do a lot of resistance exercises.

He said it isn't clear precisely why less intense but more frequent workouts yielded the biggest benefits.

To gain both strength and size, he said muscles may need more [consistent stimulation](#). "A week interval may be too long for the body," Nosaka said.

The takeaway: Exercise is probably best approached as a daily activity, rather than a one-and-done agenda, he noted.

This makes sense, according to Connie Diekman, a St. Louis sports dietitian, and former president of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

"As a sports dietitian, I worked with our athletic trainers to develop training programs that provided daily muscle work to keep muscle mass strong," she noted. "So the outcome of the study is not a surprise."

However, because participants were young, the study does not account for "the normal [muscle decline due to age](#)," Diekman added. That means "the result for older adults may not be as significant," she said.

But, the larger point still stands: "The key to muscle mass development and maintenance is working a well-fueled muscle" consistently, even if the exercise itself is minimal, Diekman said.

"We do know that regular muscle work, even if it is simply walking, does maintain muscle mass, even if there is no resistance work," she said. And

though the study's focus was on arms, there's every reason to think that the "benefit of daily muscle work can be extrapolated to all muscles in the body."

And, Diekman added, that includes one of the most important muscles of all: the heart.

Read more [here](#).

Charlie Crist to Take on Ron DeSantis for Florida Governor after Winning Democratic Primary



Rep. Crist last Tuesday in St. Petersburg, Florida

Rep. **Charlie Crist** (D) cruised to a primary victory over state Agriculture Commissioner **Nikki Fried** in Florida on Tuesday and will face Gov. **Ron DeSantis** (R) in November in the important race for Florida governor.

“Charlie Crist has a proven record of fighting for seniors,

both as Governor of Florida from 2007-2011 and as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives since 2017,” said **Bill Sauers**, President of FLARA.

“We have also appreciated Rep. Crist's leadership as a member of Congress. He's fought to strengthen and expand Medicare, and expand Social Security while protecting the program from cuts or privatization efforts.”

Rep. Crist has earned a 96% lifetime score in the Alliance's [2021 Congressional Voting Record](#) in the U.S. House.

DeSantis is [widely believed](#) to be strongly considering a bid for the White House in 2024. In April a federal judge [struck down](#) Florida's restrictive voting law, S.B. 90, finding the bill signed into law by DeSantis in 2021 to be racially discriminatory. The [Florida Alliance had filed a lawsuit](#) on the day the bill became law, specifically challenging provisions that would

make it harder for older and minority Floridians to vote. S.B. 90 is currently [on hold](#) as the state's appeal makes its way through the courts.

“The Court agreed that this law not only made it more difficult for millions of Florida citizens to exercise their constitutional right to vote but that it was intended to prevent millions of Floridians’ voices from being heard at the polls,” said Sauers in April.

The Florida Alliance's lawsuit specifically challenged provisions that:

- Impose restrictions on drop boxes voters use to return mail ballots;
- Effectively ban organizations and volunteers from helping voters return their mail ballots;
- Require voters to request mail ballots more frequently; and

Ban any non-poll worker from giving food or drink, including water, to voters waiting in line to vote.

FDA’s Announcement on Hearing Aids Could Save Relationships

About [1 in 3 Americans between the ages of 65 and 74](#) has hearing loss, and the [FDA's move](#) last week to make hearing aids available over-the-counter (OTC) is a step forward in giving seniors access to care they need. The FDA ruled that a new category of OTC hearing aids will become available for purchase without a prescription or medical exam beginning in October.

The ruling came as part of President **Biden’s** Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy and is expected to lead to some unanticipated benefits: because the hearing aids will allow many older Americans to more easily be a part of daily conversations, they are likely to save relationships and prevent isolation.



Helene Rosenthal is a board member of the Center for Hearing and Communications, which advises and advocates for people with hearing loss, and she knows the benefits of hearing aids firsthand. Speaking for many, she [describes](#) previously having to ask

friends and family to repeat themselves — and in their frustration, their answering by enunciating each and every syllable “slowly, as if she were learning English for the first time.”

Ms. Rosenthal also said that her hearing loss caused problems in her marriage until she realized she was able to address the situation.

“Over-the-counter hearing aids are likely to make a world of difference for the hearing-impaired, both socially and in their overall health,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Better hearing also leads to fewer falls and a decrease in other health risks.”

Using Covid Relief Funds to Rehire Retired Teachers Could Help Address Teacher Shortage

With school districts across the country facing [steep teacher shortages](#) — causing class sizes to swell and threatening to stagnate student achievement — some states are offering bonuses to prevent their most experienced teachers from retiring.

One solution involves states using funds appropriated by the American Rescue Plan (COVID-19 Stimulus Package), which Congress passed last year; that money can be used [to rehire retired teachers](#), Secretary of Education **Miguel Cardona** said during an appearance on “Face the Nation” last Sunday. He added that states must also make sure they support educators and improve their working conditions as part of an overall strategy to address the increased need.

The Des Moines, Iowa school system is even [offering](#) a \$50,000 retirement bonus for longtime educators if they stay one more year.

“Retired teachers have a wealth of knowledge and expertise in their field, so it is no wonder many are being asked to return,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “They should accept the offers if that is their choice, or enjoy the retirement they have earned if that is their preference.”

Life Expectancy Fell during COVID Pandemic, Especially for Hispanic and Black Males

A study published Tuesday in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (PNAS) has found that life expectancy in the U.S. fell by [4.5 and 3.6 years for Hispanic and Black males, respectively](#), in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. White Americans also saw their life expectancy decline, by 1.5 years.

Researchers say the reasons behind the life-expectancy disparities could include social inequality, crowded housing, low access to preventive information, and the disproportionate number of racial minorities who had to continue working outside the home in jobs that put them at higher risk for infection.

“It is important that public health officials consider the increased risk factors for Hispanic and Black Americans when implementing their disease prevention policies at the local level,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “We must continue to make our resources, such as vaccines and educational materials, easily accessible where they are most needed.”

The [average life expectancy](#) in the U.S. nationally dropped by nearly two years in 2020, to 77 years from 78.8 in 2019. New York State saw the biggest drop in life expectancy from 2019 to 2020: three years. Hawaii had the smallest change, 0.2 years.

WSARA News Clips:

[Chronic conditions linked to financial hardships](#)

By Tina Reed
Axios August 23, 2022

Individuals with a higher number of [chronic conditions](#) have a higher chance of encountering financial hardship like medical debt, according to a [study](#) published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*. **Why it matters:** It further cements the connection between well-being and financial stability.

[Lawsuit claims Arizona voter registration law harms low-income, minority voters](#)

Ronn Blitzer
Fox News, August 22, 2022

The Arizona Alliance, Voto Latino, and Priorities USA say in a lawsuit that Arizona's Senate Bill 1260 goes too far in restricting voting rights.

[Wyden Launches Probe Into Deceptive Marketing by Medicare Advantage Plans](#)

Kenny Stancil

Common Dreams, August 23, 2022

Sen. Ron Wyden (OR) has launched an inquiry into "potentially deceptive" marketing tactics being used by private insurers and other companies that offer Medicare benefits through Medicare Advantage and Part D prescription drug plans.

[Don't fall for scams as changes are on the way in Medicare](#)

John Chapman

WOWT (NBC - Omaha), August 19, 2022

The Inflation Reduction Act offers many benefits for older Americans. However, seniors should be careful to avoid scams involving changes to Medicare.

Upcoming Events:

Sunday, September 18: **Begin Falls Prevention Week**

Tuesday, October 11 & 12: **WSARA Annual Convention** – more info soon

Saturday, October 15: [Medicare Annual Open Enrollment Period Begins](#)

Tuesday, November 8: **General Election**

Wednesday, December 7: **Medicare Annual Open Enrollment Period**

Ends