

# Alliance for Retired Americans scores Congress in '14

U.S. Sens. Merkley and Wyden of Oregon, Murray and Cantwell of Washington, achieve perfect scores of 100 percent

By Michael Gutwig  
Editor and Manager

WASHINGTON, D.C.—U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden of Oregon, and Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell of Washington, all Democrats, were among 49 members of the U.S. Senate to achieve perfect scores of 100 percent on the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) political report for the year 2014. In the U.S. House, Oregon Democrats Suzanne Bonamici and Earl Blumenauer were among 135 representatives to achieve perfect scores in 2014.

ARA is a constituency group of the national AFL-CIO with a chapter in Portland, Oregon. The Alliance released its annual report detailing the voting record of every U.S. representative and senator on issues they feel are important to current and future retirees.

“This voting record reflects how committed our elected representatives are to retirees and older Americans,” said ARA Executive Director Richard Fiesta. “I urge you to use it to educate yourself on

where your elected representatives stand and share it with your friends and neighbors.”

ARA looked at 10 key votes in both the Senate and the House and assigned a “Pro-Retiree” score for each member of Congress. (See charts below.)

Thirty-four senators received zeroes from ARA. Of those members of the Senate who have declared their candidacy for president, or who are reported to be considering a run, Ted Cruz (R-TX), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Rob Portman (R-OH), Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Rand Paul (R-KY) scored zero, while Bernie Sanders (I-VT) scored 100 percent.

Another 122 representatives in the House received scores of zero. Among them was GOP presidential candidate Paul Ryan of Wisconsin.

In Oregon, Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-4th Dist.) scored 90 percent; Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-5th Dist.) scored 80 percent; and Rep. Greg Walden (R-2nd Dist.), scored 13 percent.

In Washington, Rep. Jamie Herrera Beutler (R-3rd Dist.) scored 10 percent.

Alliance president Barbara J. Easterling said the 113th Congress was the least productive Congress, with the exception

of the one that preceded it.

“In addition to the dysfunction, many in Congress continued to attack our core retiree programs of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid as well as the pro-retiree provisions of the 2010 Affordable Care Act.”

Easterling said raising the minimum wage is part of the ARA voting record because it would address income inequality, help many seniors who earn the minimum wage, and improve Social Security’s overall finances.

## Oregon Delegation

### SENATE

Vote Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2014 %	Lifetime %
<b>Alliance Position</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
<b>Wyden (D)</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100	93
<b>Merkley (D)</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100	100

### HOUSE

Vote Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2014 %	Lifetime %
<b>Alliance Position</b>	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N		
<b>1. Bonamici (D)</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100	100
<b>2. Walden (R)</b>	X	?	?	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	13	8
<b>3. Blumenauer (D)</b>	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100	95
<b>4. DeFazio (D)</b>	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	90	93
<b>5. Schrader (D)</b>	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	80	87

## SENATE VOTES

The following is a list of ten key votes selected as representative of the votes of critical importance to retirees taken by the U.S. Senate:

### 1 Unemployment Insurance

The Senate voted to end debate on legislation introduced by Senator Reed, D-RI, to extend emergency unemployment benefits. In 2014, 4.6% of workers 55 and over were unemployed. Older job seekers have the longest bouts of unemployment, an average duration of 11 months. The cloture motion needing 60 votes failed 55-43. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. S. 1845, Roll Call No. 24, February 6, 2014.

### 2 Debt Ceiling Increase

Senator Shaheen, D-NH, introduced a bill to raise the debt ceiling through March 15, 2015, eliminating the chance of default by the United States government. Without this raise, Social Security benefits and Medicare payments could have been halted. The bill passed 55-43. A **YES** vote is the pro-retiree vote. S. 540, Roll Call No. 34, February 12, 2014.

### 3 Medicare Doctors Payments

The Senate passed a House bill to patch the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) funding formula for Medicare physician payments. The bill averted a 21 percent payment cut and also extended the QI program, which helps low-income Medicare beneficiaries pay their Part B premiums. The bill passed 64-35. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. H.R. 4302, Roll Call No. 92, March 31, 2014.

### 4 Pay Equity

The Senate voted on a motion to proceed to the Paycheck Fairness Act, introduced by Senator Mikulski, D-MD. It would require that all differential pay be on the basis of non-discriminatory job-related business necessity. The bill would prohibit retaliation against employees for discussing or disclosing an employee’s wage and enable class action suits, and compensatory and punitive damages. Pay equity ensures higher Social Security contributions, which increases Social Security benefits and extends trust fund solvency. The motion needing 60 votes failed 53-44. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. S. 2199, Roll Call No. 103, April 9, 2014.

### 5 Minimum Wage Raise

Senator Harkin, D-IA, introduced a bill to increase the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 over three years and then index increases to inflation. Raising the minimum wage helps all workers, including older workers, and helps improve the solvency of the Social Security trust fund through increased contributions. A cloture motion needing 60 votes on the bill failed 54-42. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. S. 2223, Roll Call No. 117, April 30, 2014.

### 6 Bring Jobs Home

The Senate voted on a motion to invoke cloture on the Bring Jobs Home Act, introduced by Senator Reed, D-RI. This bill would provide a business tax credit of up to 20% of insourcing expenses to relocate business back in the U.S. and deny tax deductions for outsourcing expenses. Bringing jobs back to the U.S. would improve the nation’s economy. The cloture motion needing 60 votes failed 54-42. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. S. 2569, Roll Call No. 249, July 30, 2014.

### 7 Funding the Government

The Senate voted on a motion to waive budget rules and pass the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2014, introduced by Senator Mikulski, D-MD. This legislation funds the federal government and the waiver would have curtailed cutting vital seniors programs. The motion needing 60 votes failed 50-44. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. S. 2648, Roll Call No. 252, July 31, 2014.

### 8 Social Security Advisory Board

The Senate voted to confirm presidential nominee Henry J. Aaron to the Social Security Advisory Board. Aaron is a respected economist and a long-time advocate for the Social Security program. He was confirmed 54-43. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. Roll Call No. 258, September 8, 2014.

### 9 Social Security Commissioner

The Senate voted on a motion to proceed to the Carolyn Watts Colvin nomination for Social Security Commissioner. The confirmation of a commissioner would give the agency permanent leadership as the Baby Boomer generation retires. The motion needing 60 votes failed 52-41. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. Roll Call No. 329, December 13, 2014.

### 10 Surgeon General

The Senate voted on the confirmation of Dr. Vivek Hallegere Murthy for Surgeon General. The Surgeon General advises the Assistant Secretary of Health on matters of public health, including many issues affecting the health of older Americans. He was confirmed 51-43. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. Roll Call No. 356, December 15, 2014.

## HOUSE VOTES

The following is a list of ten key votes selected as representative of the votes of critical importance to retirees taken by the U.S. House of Representatives:

### 1 Debt Ceiling

The House voted to raise the debt ceiling through March 15, 2015, eliminating the chance of default and ensuring that the government could pay its financial obligations. In the event that the debt ceiling was breached, Social Security and Medicare payments could have been halted. The bill passed 221-201. A **YES** vote is the pro-retiree vote. S. 540, Roll Call No. 61, February 11, 2014.

### 2 Cut Consumer Protections

The House passed legislation, introduced by Representative Duffy, R-WI, that would weaken the Consumer Financial Protection Act (Dodd-Frank) by curtailing the ability of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to enforce consumer protections enacted after the financial crisis of 2007-2008. The bill passed 232-182. A **NO** vote is a pro-retiree vote. H.R. 3193, Roll Call No. 85, February 27, 2014.

### 3 Deregulation

The House passed the Unfunded Mandate Information and Transparency Act of 2013 introduced by Rep. Foxx, R-NC. The bill would give authority to the Congressional Budget Office and Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs unprecedented powers to overturn protections in areas such as public health, consumer protections, and drug safety. The bill passed 234-176. A **NO** vote is a pro-retiree vote. H.R. 899, Roll Call No. 90, February 28, 2014.

### 4 Protect Civil Rights

The House voted on an amendment by Representative Conyers, D-MI, to the ENFORCE the Law Act of 2014. The underlying bill would allow either the House or Senate to overturn President Obama’s executive orders. The Conyers amendment would exempt all actions to combat discrimination or to protect civil rights. The amendment failed 188-227. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. H.R. 4138, Roll Call No.120, March 12, 2014.

### 5 Health Care Repeal

The House included language to repeal the 2010 Affordable Care Act in a bill, introduced by Representative Burgess, R-TX, to reform Medicare physician payments. The 2010 law contains several pro-retiree provisions, including the elimination of co-pays and deductibles for preventive care screenings and an annual wellness checkup. The law also included the closing of the Part D doughnut hole drug coverage gap and the phasing out of overpayments to Medicare Advantage plans. The bill passed 238-181. A **NO** vote is the pro-retiree vote. H.R. 4015, Roll Call No. 135, March 14, 2014.

### 6 Pro-Retiree Budget

The House voted on a budget plan by Rep. Van Hollen, D-MD, as an alternative to the House Republican budget resolution for Fiscal Year 2015. This alternative raises revenues by closing tax loopholes for the wealthiest Americans and produces Medicare savings by requiring pharmaceutical companies to pay rebates for low-income beneficiaries. The measure does not cut Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid benefits. The amendment failed 163-261. A **YES** vote is a pro-retiree vote. H. Con. Res. 96, Roll Call No. 176, April 10, 2014.

### 7 Medicare Privatization

The House passed a budget resolution, introduced by Rep. Ryan, R-WI, that replaces the guaranteed benefits of Medicare with a privatized system. Under the Ryan plan, Medicare would be privatized, voucher-like payments would go to insurance companies and seniors would have significantly higher out of pocket costs. The resolution passed 219-205. A **NO** vote is the pro-retiree vote. H. Con. Res. 96, Roll Call No. 177, April 10, 2014.

### 8 Senior Housing Cuts

Representative Chabot, R-OH, offered an amendment to the Transportation HUD funding bill that cuts funding for Section 8 housing assistance by \$2.9 billion. Budget cuts and sequestration have cut housing funding forcing many seniors to live in inadequate, dangerous or substandard housing. The amendment failed 127-279. A **NO** vote is a pro-retiree vote. H.R. 4745, Roll Call No. 274, June 9, 2014.

### 9 Tax Loopholes

The House passed a bill, introduced by Representative Tiberi, R-OH, that would amend the tax code to make permanent the accelerated depreciation loophole, and also exempt resulting revenue losses from mandated pay as you go requirements. Enacting more tax cuts will increase the deficit and put pressure to reduce spending in other areas, including programs vital to seniors. The bill passed 272-144. A **NO** vote is a pro-retiree vote. H.R. 4457, Roll Call No. 309, June 12, 2014.

### 10 Cut Health Care Coverage

The House passed a bill, introduced by Representative Camp, R-MI, to change the minimum hours for health care coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) from 30 hours to 40 hours. Economists estimate that the change would create more part time workers and undermine the operation of the ACA. The bill passed 253-163. A **NO** vote is a pro-retiree vote. H.R. 4, Roll Call No. 513, September 18, 2014.