

Main Line Suburban Life

Ardmore, PA

Editorial Page: **Don't Deprive Seniors**

To the Editor:

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On Christmas Eve the U.S. Senate slid through its own version of the health-care reform bill. The bill fails to protect the earned post-retirement health-care benefits of tens of millions of American retirees like me. Unjustly this legislation goes a step further in the wrong direction by actually financially penalizing corporations that do the right thing by continuing to provide retiree prescription-drug benefits they promised to their former workers.

I spent 43 years working for General Electric and Lockheed Martin corporations as an engineer and senior manager. Aren't my lifelong dedication and the wages I contributed over many decades in exchange for retirement health-care coverage worth protecting? There are 18.5 million American retirees in the same boat as me who took less in wages and less vacation over decades so their employer could sock those funds away to pay for our health-care benefits in retirement. If the Senate version of the health-care reform bill is mandating that it be stripped from us, we deserve answers now from our senators on Capitol Hill.

The Senate's health-reform bill (H.R. 3590 As Amended) lacks provisions of the original House of Representatives bill (H.R. 3962), which includes key protections contained within another vital bill, the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act (H.R. 1322). H.R. 1322 prohibits employers from making post-retirement cuts or eliminating the earned health benefits of people after they retired.

The anti-retiree and anti-baby boomer legislation that passed the Senate just as Santa mounted his sled was nothing more than a lump of coal in the stockings of millions of older Americans. It encourages, and in some cases will force, corporations to reduce benefits. Ironically those of us who have already earned health benefits by making sacrifices during our working years now have to fight our own elected officials.

It is bewildering how our senators can do absolutely nothing to protect the rights of America's retirees who throughout their careers accepted lower wages and took less paid time off from work to be assured of health-care coverage in our retirement years. Let's be clear: none of us is asking for a handout, just a guarantee that the new federal health-care reform bill treat us fairly and not cancel the benefits we earned over a lifetime.

With both houses of Congress currently working towards combining their individual health-care reform bills, now is the time to act for the protection of earned retiree health-care benefits.

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