2027 Social Security increase announced

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

We have our new number now. The Social Security increase for 2027 has been announced. All over the country I imagine that seniors are grabbing calculators and figuring out just what this will mean for them.

The number is 3.6%, which is not great, but it could be worse. For 2026 it was 2.8%, and 2.5% the year before. (A rerun of the 2023 increase of 8.7% would have been nice.)

This means that 76 million Social Security recipients will see approximately an extra $75 per month, bumping the average benefit to $2,170 per month.

To come up with this number, they take the figures from the third quarter and create a COLA – Cost of Living Adjustment. Additionally, they use the CPI-W, which is the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers.

Which is not us.

A show of hands: How many of us are still working as wage earners and clerical workers? Not many. Yet that is the index they use to calculate the amount of money we will get. That index takes all the things those wage earners and clerical workers spend money on – food, transportation, clothing, education, housing – and calculates the number from there.

There are many who think they should use another index that actually represents where we spend our money – the Consumer Price Index for Americans 62 Years of Age and Older (CPI-E). That index puts more weight on medical care, prescription drugs and insurance premiums, for example, and the others things we actually buy.

Medicare is going up, of course. The Medicare Part B monthly premium will be $209.50 next year, deducted from the Social Security amount, with a $292 annual deductible.

If you don't agree with using the CPI-W to calculate your Social Security COLA, let your senators and representatives know!

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Pharmacy chain nailed for fraud

VETERANS POST

by Freddy Groves

Now here's a real shocker. Typically when the VA's Office of Inspector General (VAOIG) and the DOJ have nailed criminals, it's been either an individual or a handful of thieves. To learn of a major chain in the U.S. being pegged for crimes isn't something we expect.

But it has happened. A long-established pharmacy chain with approximately 9,000 locations around the country has been hit with a $315 million fine for fraud crimes they've committed for 13 years. They were reported by a whistleblower.

The crime: illegally filling prescriptions for opioids and other substances and then filing for payment from the VA, Medicare and other federal healthcare programs. Specifically, they were filling prescriptions that they knew "lacked a legitimate medical purpose, were not valid and/or were not issued in the usual course of professional practice." Additionally, prescriptions were filled from prescribers known to issue fraudulent prescriptions and were in dangerous combinations of other opioids.

Why did pharmacists willingly fill prescriptions they knew were suspect or dangerous or fake? Apparently it was because of corporate policy. Headquarters imposed "performance metrics" and – in something that will send a chill down your spine – created policies that "allegedly prevented pharmacists from warning one another about certain problematic prescribers."

Read that again: They kept pharmacists from telling their co-workers about problems with prescriptions.

From now on the chain will be required to do something they should have been doing all along. They're going to create a hotline for employees and the public to report suspected illegal dispensing of drugs, monitor patterns of prescribing opioids and watch the prescribers suspected of illegal prescribing.

So, I'm shocked, but thinking back, maybe I shouldn't be. For years I had my prescriptions filled at a location in this chain, by a great pharmacist. But I always sensed he was unhappy and under stress. One day he disappeared. Word was he went to work for a very small local pharmacy and that he was very happy there. Now I know why.

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Middlebury Senior Center/Social Services

The Elderly & Social Services office is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Shepardson Community Center at 1172 Whittemore Road. Phone: 203-577-4166.

Holidays – The Senior Center/Social Services office will be closed Wednesday, November 11, 2026, for the Veterans Day holiday and Thursday and Friday, November 26 and 27 for Thanksgiving.

Shopping – The Senior Center minibus will travel to ShopRite in Southbury Mondays, November 9 and 23 and to Walmart in Naugatuck Thursday, November 19, leaving the Senior Center at 9:30 a.m.

Blood Drive – A blood drive will be held Friday, November 6, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Register online at RedCrossBlood.org or call 800-733-2767 for an appointment and get a $10 Amazon Gift Card.

AARP Driving Classes – The class will be Monday, November 9, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Refresh your driving skills and knowledge of the rules of the road. Learn techniques for handling left turns, right-of-way and roundabouts. Take the course and you might save money on your auto insurance! The fee is $20 for members and $25 for non-members, payable by checks made out to AARP. Registration is required at 203-577-4166.

Thursday Lunches – Senior Nutrition Services offers lunches every Thursday as eat-in or take out for a $3.50 donation. Each meal includes an entree, vegetable, fruit, bread and milk. For the menu, call 203-577-4166.

Blood Pressure Check – The visiting nurse can check your blood pressure every Tuesday between 10 a.m. and noon.

Karate Class – The class meets Thursdays, from 9 to 10:30 a.m. For more information, call 203-758-2420.

Lunch and Learn – Thursday, November 12, home care services information presented by Bright Star Home Care will be followed by a free lunch. Call 203-577-4166 to reserve a seat..

Commission on Aging – The commission will meet Tuesday, November 17, at 9:30 a.m. in the Shepardson Community Center dining area.

Cooking Class – Wednesday, November 18, at noon, seniors are invited to a free cooking class. Learn simple budget-friendly recipes, share a few laughs, and enjoy the joy of cooking together and meeting new friends. Call to reserve your spot, 203-577-4166.

Medicare Presentation – Medicare open enrollment information will be presented Friday, November 20, at 11 a.m.

Volunteers needed – The IRS-sponsored Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs have offered free tax preparation and financial education to millions of taxpayers since 1969. They provide free tax return preparation for low-to-moderate income and elderly taxpayers, and they are looking for volunteers.

To volunteer or get more information, call 800-906-9887. Learn how to make a difference in your community by volunteering or learn how to become a VITA/TCE program partner.

Medicare Appointments – Thursday, November 29, the WCAAA is offering one on one appointments from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. to help with Medicare enrollment, which is open through December 7, 2026. Please call 203-577-4166 to schedule an appointment.

Computers – Sean Howard leads an Ancestry workshop every Tuesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Call Sean at 203-577-4166, ext. 4, for more information.

Book Club – The book club meets the last Wednesday of the month, November 25. If you love to read, call 203-577-4166 for more information.

Connecticut Energy Assistance – This program began September 1, 2026. Applications will be accepted only during the following dates: December 1 to 15, 2026, and March 1 to 15, 2027. Call 203-577-4166 for more information.

Connecticut CEAP Energy Assistance – Applications are being accepted for November deliveries. Call 203-577-4166 for an appointment.

Coming in December

Annual Christmas Party – The Middlebury Senior Center annual Christmas party will be Thursday, December 10, 2026. The fee is $20 per person. Call 203-577-4166 for more information.

The Food Bank is open to Middlebury residents by appointment, and the office can assist those applying for SNAP benefits. If you need the food bank and can't get there during regular hours, call 203-577-4166 to see if arrangements can be made for you to pick up food.

Call 203-577-4166, ext. 1, or email JoAnn Cappelletti at jcappelletti@middlebury-ct.org if you need assistance. Find them on Facebook @MiddleburyCT-srCTR.

Remember to recycle your newspapers.

Salome's Stars

Horoscope for the week of November 2, 2026.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) You might be growing impatient with a situation that seems to resist efforts to resolve it. But staying with it raises the odds that you'll find a way to a successful resolution.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Travel and kinship are strong in the Bovine's aspect this week. This would be a good time to combine the two and take a trip to see family members for a preholiday get-together.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) A colleague could make a request that you're not comfortable with. If so, say so. It's better to disappoint someone by sticking with your principles than to disappoint yourself if you don't.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) The Moon Child's ability to adapt to life's ebbs and flows helps you deal with the changes that you might confront at work or at home – or both. Things settle down by the week's end.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) It's a good week for LEOs and LEOnas to get some long-outstanding business matters resolved. Then go ahead and plan a fun-filled family getaway weekend with the mate and cubs!

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) A possible workplace change seems promising. If you decide to look into it, try not to form an opinion on just a small part of the picture. Wait for the full image to develop.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) A newcomer helps keep things moving. There might be some bumpy moments along the way, but at least you're heading in the right direction! You win praise for your choices.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) You could be pleasantly surprised by how a decision about one thing opens up an unexpected new option. Also, assistance on a project could come from a surprising source.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) With more information to work with, you might now be able to start the process that could lead to a major change. Reserve the weekend for family and friends.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) This could be a good time to begin gathering information that will help you turn a long-held idea into something substantive. Meanwhile, a personal matter might need extra attention.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) A new challenge might carry some surprises, but you should be able to handle them using what you already know. A new supporter should be there to lend assistance.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Someone might be trying to disguise their true motives. But the perceptive and perspicacious PISCES should have little to no problem finding the truth in all that foggy rhetoric!

BORN THIS WEEK: You can always rely on your resourcefulness and determination to help you find solutions to problems that others often give up on.

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Read your weekly horoscope at bee-news.com

The page 1 quote is the first verse of the following poem.

November comes
And November goes,
With the last red berries
And the first white snows.

With night coming early,
And dawn coming late,
And ice in the bucket
And frost by the gate.

The fires burn
And the kettles sing,
And earth sinks to rest
Until next spring.

~ Elizabeth Coatsworth (1893–1986)

