

Should You Join AARP?

The AARP used to be the American Association of Retired Persons. The AARP is known for representing and speaking on behalf of aging populations based in the United States. It is involved in all kinds of activities such as: negotiating reduced rates for prescriptions, housing, tourist attractions, automobile rentals, motels and hotels. It is at present involved politically with the Medicare Prescription Drug Program. The AARP was founded in 1958 by Ethel Percy Andrus and hopes to have 70 million members in the next ten years due to the increasing age of the US population. It is interesting that the AARP is fighting the proposed changes to Social Security. The AARP has changed its role over the last few decades so as to reflect current living standards and the way in which we now approach age with dignity and purpose. On its website discounted trips to Hawaii and Alaska are advertised as well as news specifically geared to seniors, such as employment news, legal advice, health and fitness information and other interesting items. At present some of the hot button items the AARP is working with are: Prescription Drugs; Prescription Drugs over the last 5 years have increased much more rapidly in costs than the rate of inflation and as such are a heavy burden on Seniors.



The AARP makes available the results of studies of changes in manufacturers' prescription drug list prices for 200 brand name and 75 generic drugs most widely used by Americans age 50 and over. Social Security; President Bush seems to think that there will not be enough money in the future to pay for Social Security benefits for Seniors at today's level. His private accounts plan would allow workers to invest up to one third of their payroll contributions in the Stock Market. Based on Stock Market results for the time President Bush has been in office this would have resulted in a loss for the average Senior taking inflation into account. And the indexing plan that Bush embraced at his April 28 press conference would preserve the present defined-benefit approach only for low-wage workers those currently earning less than about \$20,000. For everyone else, 70 percent of workers, the system would be flipped upside down so that the more you earn and pay in, the more your benefits are cut. Consumer alerts; Last year Americans spent more than \$20 billion on anti-aging products of which a sizeable amount was for so called "snake oil" products such as "human growth hormone" pills which sold for \$80 blue water homecare per bottle per month and promised to cure anything that ails you. The US Food and Drug Administration doesn't regulate over-the-counter products so it is buyer beware.