



Seniors Lose 31 Percent of Their Buying Power Since 2000 *2014 Annual Survey of Senior Costs Finds Expenses Have Increased More Than Twice as Fast as Social Security COLA*

(Washington, DC) – Seniors have lost almost one-third of their buying power since 2000, according to the Annual Survey of Senior Costs, released today by The Senior Citizens League (TSCL). The findings are the same as last year, showing no improvement in the buying power of Social Security benefits despite recent low inflation.

In most years, seniors receive a small increase in their Social Security checks, intended to help them keep up with rising costs. But since 2000, the Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) has increased benefits just 41 percent while typical senior expenses have jumped 84 percent, more than twice as fast. Inflation has been at historic lows in recent years and seniors received a 1.5 percent COLA this year.

Category	Expense	Cost in 2000	Cost in 2014	Percent Increase, 2000-2014
Housing	Ownership costs	N/A*	N/A*	40%
	Apartment rental	N/A*	N/A*	51%
	Homeowner's insurance (annual)	\$508.00	\$1,135.00	123%
	Real estate tax (annual)	\$690.00	\$1,405.44	104%
	Heating oil (gallon)	\$1.15	\$4.02	251%
	Natural gas (gallon)	\$1.01	\$2.83	180%
	Electricity (per kw hr.)	\$.08	\$.12	50%
Transportation	Gas, all grades (gallon)	\$1.31	\$3.41	160%
	New & used vehicles	N/A*	N/A*	(-1%)
	Oil change	\$23.11	\$45.31	96%
	Maintenance/ repair	N/A	N/A	51%
Medical	Total out-of-pocket medical expenses	\$1,074.50	\$1,289.53	20%
	Prescription drugs, generic, brand, special	\$623.70	\$548.35	-12%
	Dental, general visits	\$377.40	\$510.38	35%

	Medicare Part B premiums (monthly)	\$45.50	\$104.90	131%
	Medicare Part D premiums	\$25.93	\$39.90	54% (since 2006) ¹
Food	10 lbs. potatoes	\$2.98	\$5.98	101%
	1 lb. butter	\$2.52	\$3.55	41%
	Milk (gallon)	\$2.78	\$3.55	28%
	Eggs (dozen)	\$0.93	\$2.01	116%
	Ground chuck (lb.)	\$1.90	\$3.59	89%
	Chicken (lb.)	\$1.06	\$1.53	44%
	Bread, white loaf	\$.91	\$1.36	49%
	Coffee (lb.)	\$3.54	\$5.03	42%
	Apples (lb.)	\$.95	\$1.28	35%
	Oranges (lb.)	\$.61	\$1.12	84%
Recreation	Recreation, misc.	N/A	N/A	13%
Communication	First class postage	\$.33	\$.45	36%
	Basic phone service, land line	\$55.37	\$76.01	37%
Apparel	Clothing	N/A*	N/A*	(-2%)
Other	Personal care products	N/A*	N/A*	6%
	Personal care services	N/A*	N/A*	37%

*N/A indicates that actual national average price information was “not available.” Numeric price data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics was used instead to determine price change.

“This survey illustrates why budget proposals that would cut the growth of COLAs would put millions of older and disabled Americans at risk of insufficient income to cover more growing expenses,” says Ed Cates, chairman of The Senior Citizens League (TSLC). “To put it in perspective, for every \$100 worth of expenses seniors could afford in 2000, they can afford just \$69 today,” Cates adds.

A senior with the average Social Security benefit in 2000 received \$816 per month, a figure that rose to \$1,146.80 by 2014. However, that senior would require a Social Security benefit of \$1,501.40 per month in 2014 *just to maintain his or her 2000 buying power*.

The study examined the increase in costs of 33 key items between 2000 and January 2014. The items were chosen because they are typical of the costs seniors must bear. Of the 33 costs analyzed, 27 exceeded the amount of increase in the COLA over the same period. The selected items represent eight categories, weighted by approximate expenditure.

A majority of the 55 million senior and disabled Americans who receive Social Security depend on it for at least 50 percent of their total income, and one-in-three beneficiaries relies on it for 90 percent or more of his or her total income.

To help protect buying power of benefits, The Senior Citizens League is fighting proposals to cut COLAs. TSLC has developed an online calculator for the public to learn how much a COLA cut would cost in Social Security income. Visit <http://seniorsleague.org/chained-cola-calculator/>.

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With 1.2 million supporters, The Senior Citizens League is one of the nation’s largest nonpartisan seniors groups. Its mission is to promote and assist members and supporters, to educate and alert senior citizens about their rights and

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freedoms as U.S. Citizens, and to protect and defend the benefits senior citizens have earned and paid for. The Senior Citizens League is a proud affiliate of The Retired Enlisted Association. Visit www.SeniorsLeague.org for more information.

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