



The Republican Record: Putting Special Interests Ahead of America's Health Care

This week marks the 50th anniversary of the creation of Medicare and Medicaid. Signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965, together these two programs today provide health coverage for more than 125 million children and elderly, disabled, or low-income Americans, many of whom would otherwise likely be uninsured. Democrats fought Republican opposition to create Medicare and Medicaid in 1965 and have spent the last 50 years fighting Republican efforts to undermine these vital sources of health coverage for millions of Americans. The Affordable Care Act (ACA), strengthens and improves both programs, making Medicare a stronger, more sustainable program and increasing coverage under Medicaid to provide needed health care to millions of vulnerable Americans.

Medicare and Medicaid Matter to Hard-Working Americans

Medicare guarantees seniors will have quality healthcare. Medicare covers about 55 million elderly Americans and individuals with disabilities. Before Medicare was enacted, about half of the elderly didn't have health insurance; today, coverage of the elderly is near universal. [CMS, [7/28/15](#)]

Medicaid makes sure Americans can afford health coverage. Medicaid and CHIP currently provide coverage to more than 71 million Americans, including nearly 30 million children. Because of Medicaid, millions of children have comprehensive health insurance and millions of the seniors and persons with disabilities have access to long-term care. [CMS, [7/28/15](#)]

Americans Strongly Support Medicare and Medicaid. A newly released poll from the Kaiser Family Foundation shows that: [Kaiser Family Foundation, [7/17/15](#)]

- 77 percent of the public believes that Medicare is a “very important” program and nearly two-thirds say the same for Medicaid.
- 7 in 10 Americans, including nearly two-thirds of Republicans and 77 percent of seniors believe that Medicare should remain a guaranteed benefit program and not be transitioned to a voucher-like program as Republicans have proposed.
- More than six in 10 Americans believe that Medicaid's financing structure should continue as it does today, while less than one-third believe it should be converted into a block grant program.

Republicans Voted to End the Medicare Guarantee and Raise Costs for Seniors

The Republican budget takes Medicare benefits away from current seniors and again calls for taking away the Medicare guarantee from future seniors. The Republican budget maintains the

House policy statement on turning Medicare into a voucher program and repeals the Affordable Care Act, which would increase costs to current seniors for prescription drugs and preventive care.

- Under a previous Republican voucher plan, seniors in Medicare would receive a voucher instead of guaranteed benefits starting in 2024. The Republican plan is designed to drive away more healthy beneficiaries from the traditional Medicare program, setting off a premium spiral that could cause Medicare to “wither on the vine.” [Republican Conference Budget, 4/29/15; CBO, [9/18/13](#); New York Times, [7/20/96](#)]
- By repealing the ACA, the Republican budget would take away billions of savings that seniors have realized from the closing of the prescription drug donut hole in Medicare.
 - In 2014, 5.1 million seniors and individuals with disabilities saved more than \$4.8 billion dollars on prescription drugs because of the Affordable Care Act, which is repealed by the Republican budget. Since the enactment of health reform, 9.4 million seniors and people with disabilities have saved a total of \$15 billion on prescription drugs.
 - Additionally, nearly 39 million seniors and individuals with disabilities in Medicare would be forced to pay for preventive services that are now free because of the Affordable Care Act, such as colonoscopies and mammograms. [Republican Conference Budget, 4/29/15; CMS, [2/24/15](#)]

Republicans have also voted to raise the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67, pushing benefits back for future beneficiaries and forcing these seniors to pay more for their health care. And in a world where Republicans have repealed the ACA, millions of these seniors would go uninsured as a result. [S.Con.Res. 37, [5/16/12](#); Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [5/9/12](#)]

The Republican budget cuts Medicaid by more than \$1.2 trillion, taking away affordable health coverage from millions of seniors and working-class Americans.

- The Republican budget would repeal the Medicaid expansion that has provided millions of working-class Americans with health insurance, pulling the rug out from beneath them just as they achieve health and financial security. In total, 14 million Americans would lose their Medicaid coverage or no longer gain coverage in the future. [Republican Conference Budget, 4/29/15; CBPP, [3/17/15](#); CBO, [3/9/15](#); CMS, accessed [3/15/15](#)]
- The Republican budget also supports block granting pre-ACA Medicaid funding to states, cutting even more working-class Americans and their children from the insurance rolls. According to a CBO analysis of a similar Medicaid block grant proposal offered by Ryan two years ago, states would “need to increase their spending on these programs, make considerable cutbacks in them, or both. Cutbacks might involve reduced eligibility . . . coverage of fewer services, lower payments to providers, or increased cost-sharing by beneficiaries — all of which would reduce access to care.” The Urban Institute estimated that such a block grant proposal would result a reduction of Medicaid enrollment of between 14.3 million and 20.5 million people by 2022 and a cut to providers of more than 30 percent by that time. [Republican Conference Budget, 4/29/15; CBPP, [3/17/15](#); CBO, [3/20/12](#); Urban Institute, [10/17/12](#)]

- Block granting Medicaid would also mean a cut of up to \$265 billion in nursing care and other services and supports for seniors and individuals with disabilities. A block grant would jeopardize these vital services that seniors depend on, such as long-term care and home health services, and shift the burden of rising health care costs to cash-strapped states. [Republican Conference Budget, 4/29/15; CBPP, [3/9/15](#); Kaiser Family Foundation, accessed [3/17/15](#)]

Republicans Have a Long History of Attacking Medicare and Medicaid

Despite the clear benefits of the Medicare and Medicaid programs for the American people, when the legislation creating Medicare and Medicaid passed in July 1965, the majority of Republican Senators voted against both Senate passage of Medicare and the final conference report. [Congressional Record, 7/9/1965; Social Security Administration, accessed [9/16/2009](#)]

Since then, Republican Senators have repeatedly voted to:

- [Approve Budgets that voucherize Medicare and block grant Medicaid](#); and
- [Raise the age of eligibility for Medicare benefits](#).