

DEMOCRATS CREATED MEDICARE, HAVE PROTECTED MEDICARE, AND WILL FIGHT TO PRESERVE MEDICARE FOR THE FUTURE

July 30th marks the 46th anniversary of when the Medicare program was enacted. President Johnson signed Medicare into law on July 30, 1965 in Independence, Missouri, with former President Truman attending. Over the last 46 years, Democrats have continuously fought to protect and strengthen Medicare.



1965

It is Democrats who were the creators of the Medicare program, just as they were the creators of the Social Security program. From the beginning, Republicans were generally opposed to creating a social insurance program such as Medicare.

In every Congress between 1952 and 1965, the Medicare bill was introduced by congressional Democrats. Throughout this period, Republicans showed their hostility. For example, in 1960, the Senate defeated an amendment containing the Medicare proposal by a vote of 44 to 51, with 97% of Republicans voting nay and in 1962, the Senate adopted a motion to kill an amendment containing the Medicare proposal by a vote of 52 to 48, with 86% of Republicans voting to kill the proposal.

Republicans spent 13 years – from 1952, the first year a Medicare bill was introduced, to 1965 – attempting to ensure Medicare was never enacted.

In November 1964, President Lyndon Johnson won a landslide re-election victory, promising during his campaign that Medicare would finally be enacted in 1965. As Congress convened in January 1965, Medicare finally seemed like a reality but in a last desperate attempt to kill Medicare, Republicans came up with an “alternative” to create a voluntary health insurance program for the elderly, with no guaranteed funding and no guaranteed benefits. While 93% of House Republicans voted in favor of the Republican “alternative,” some House Republicans – apparently out of fear of the wrath of their constituents – turned around, after voting aye on the Republican substitute, and voted in favor of the final conference report on Medicare. Accepting the inevitability of passage, 51% of House Republicans ended up voting aye on the conference report but these last-minute vote switches do not hide the determined resistance of congressional Republicans to the creation of the Medicare program over the course of the prior 13 years.

Typical GOP comments about what the creation of Medicare would mean during the 1965 debate include many of the same sentiments we have heard in more recent debates:

“We cannot stand idly by now, as the nation is urged to embark on an ill-conceived adventure in government medicine.”

Rep. Durward Hall
(R-MO)

“We are going on the assumption that this is not socialized medicine. Let me tell you here and now it is socialized medicine.”

Rep. James Utt (R-CA)

“May I state that this bill is a sugar-coated pill that is being swallowed in an easy fashion, but its ill effects will be felt in the ultimate crippling of our medical services.”

Rep. Edward Derwinski (R-IL)

“Believing as I do that Medicare is the first step towards socialized medicine in America, I intend to vote NO on final passage.”

Rep. Delbert Latta
(R-OH)

30 YEARS LATER

In the 1990s, President Clinton and Congressional Democrats had to fight off Republican efforts to undermine Medicare. In 1995, when they won control of Congress, Republicans launched a year-long effort to cut Medicare by \$270 billion over 7 years – including cuts harmful to seniors such as increased out-of-pocket costs – in order to pay for \$245 billion in tax cuts for the wealthy.

The Republican legislation would have cut Medicare 20% by the year 2002 and doubled the Medicare premiums that seniors pay each month over seven years. President Clinton vetoed the bill:

On 10/26/95, 96% of House Republicans, including Rep. John Boehner, voted to cut Medicare by \$270 billion to pay for \$245 billion in tax cuts for the wealthy.
1995 Roll Call Vote #743

On 11/17/95, 99.5% of House Republicans, including Rep. John Boehner, voted for the final conference report to cut Medicare by \$270 billion to pay for \$245 billion in tax cuts for the wealthy.
1995 Roll Call Vote #812

On 12/6/95, President Clinton vetoed the Republican legislation to cut Medicare by \$270 billion to pay for \$245 billion in tax cuts for the wealthy.

In 1996, despite the fact that President Clinton had vetoed their bill to cut Medicare in the previous year, Congressional Republicans decided to try again. This time, they wrote a plan to cut Medicare by \$168 billion over 6 years – including cuts harmful to seniors such as increased out-of-pocket costs – in order to pay for \$122 billion in tax cuts for the wealthy.

On 5/16/96, 98% of House Republicans, including Rep. John Boehner, voted to cut Medicare by \$168 billion to pay for \$122 billion in tax cuts for the wealthy.
1996 Roll Call Vote #179

On 6/12/96, 92% of House Republicans, including Rep. John Boehner, voted for the final conference report to cut Medicare by \$168 billion to pay for \$122 billion in tax cuts for the wealthy.
1996 Roll Call Vote #236

Although Republicans passed these deep Medicare cuts in their budget, they decided not to put them in a bill to send to President Clinton, because they knew the President would veto these cuts once again.

2011

Democrats are once again fighting to preserve and protect Medicare. In 1995, when they won control of Congress, Republicans' top priority was to cut Medicare to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy. Now, having once again won control of Congress, Republicans are not only trying to cut Medicare to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy, but they're also trying to end Medicare completely and instead give seniors vouchers to go out and buy private insurance. For all Americans under 55, the Republican bill:

- Increases out-of-pocket health care costs for the typical senior by more than \$6,000 a year
- Requires seniors, by 2030, to be paying 68% of their health care costs, with the voucher covering only 32%
- Puts seniors at the mercy of private insurance companies
- No longer guarantees seniors the same level of benefits and choice of doctor they have today under Medicare

"We didn't get rid of [Medicare] in round one because we don't think that's politically smart... But we believe it's going to wither on the vine."
Then-Speaker Newt Gingrich,
10/24/95

"[Medicare is] a program I would have no part of in a free world."
Then-Majority Leader Dick
Armey, 7/11/95

The Republican bill also cuts benefits for current Medicare beneficiaries by re-opening the prescription drug donut hole – costing an estimated 4 million seniors up to \$44 billion by 2020 – and increasing the costs of annual wellness visits and other preventive services for millions of seniors.

Democrats will ensure that this GOP plan is defeated. In 1965, Democrats created Medicare, and over the last 46 years, we have fought vigorously to protect and strengthen Medicare. Several times over the last 46 years, Democrats have crafted legislation that extended Medicare's solvency – most recently in the Affordable Care Act which extended solvency for an additional eight years. Democrats will continue to work to strengthen Medicare's solvency and ensure that Medicare – the promise we have made to our seniors – will be there for future generations.