

Social Security, Medicare, and other programs for older Americans have helped strengthen the middle class and ensure dignity in old age for millions. I believe seniors should receive the benefits they've earned through a lifetime of hard work, and I am skeptical of attempts to substantially alter these important programs.

In recent years, much of the Congressional debate about Medicare and Social Security has focused on different approaches to ensuring their long-term viability. While I agree the long-term solvency of Social Security must be addressed due to changing demographics, I have opposed privatizing the program or slashing guaranteed benefits. I have worked to improve and modernize Social Security by voting for investments in technology to enable the Social Security Administration to more efficiently process new claims. I have also supported efforts to reduce the Social Security hearings backlog, prevent a backlog recurrence, and improve the speed and quality of services for retirees. In its current form the program functions efficiently and effectively, providing a safety net that lets seniors retire with dignity and peace of mind.

I also have concerns about [proposals to end Medicare as we know it](#) and use the savings to lower tax rates yet again for wealthy taxpayers. The Republican budget proposal offered by Rep. Paul Ryan would transform Medicare into a voucher program and force seniors to rely once again on the private insurance market. According to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO), 65-year-olds would pay on average some \$6,500 more per year to buy private coverage than they would pay for coverage through Medicare. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), this plan is "likely to simply increase costs for beneficiaries while removing Medicare's promise of secure health coverage."

The Republican plan also would replace Medicaid, a program that aids millions of low-income seniors and the disabled, with a system of block grants to states. This would make slashes of benefits far more likely. I strongly oppose these efforts and voted against them in the House, and I will fight against any future attempts by the House Republicans to weaken these critical programs or threaten their long-term solvency. Shifting health costs onto seniors in order to fund tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans is simply the wrong approach to the long-run fiscal issues facing our country.

I have supported prudent measures to extend the solvency of Medicare. The Affordable Care Act extended the solvency of the Medicare program, improved preventative care and closed gaps in prescription drug benefits, while curbing over-payments to private Medicare Advantage plans and demanding higher standards of care. You can learn more about how the health care

law benefits seniors [here](#) and how the law helps contain health care costs [here](#) .