

Letter to the Editor: Resident has questions and concerns about Medicare

Written by Betsy Blevins

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To the Editor:

Medicare - do you have it? Do you want to keep it? Do you want it available to your friends, your children - your grandchildren? Are you paying into the Medicare Fund now or, if you are retired, while you were working? If you are retired and drawing Social Security do you pay a Medicare premium?

Why are we hearing Medicare being framed as a "giveaway" program? Why is the Republican budget proposal aiming to replace Medicare with private insurance plans? If Medicare is indeed very costly, why did the Republicans complain about reforms to Medicare during the Healthcare Reform debate?

Do you remember life before Medicare? When Lyndon Johnson signed the Medicare Bill into law in 1965, he said in part, "every citizen will be able, during his productive years, while he's earning, to insure himself against the ravages of illness in his old age. This insurance will help pay for care in hospitals and skilled nursing homes or in the home. And under a separate plan, it will help meet the fees of the doctors. No longer will older Americans be denied the healing miracle of modern medicine. No longer will illness crush and destroy the savings that they have carefully put away over a lifetime so that they might enjoy dignity in their later years. No longer will young families see their own incomes and their own hopes eaten away simply because they're carrying out their deep moral obligation to their parents and to their uncles and their aunts. And no longer will this nation refuse the hand of justice to those who have given a lifetime of service, wisdom, and labor to the progress of this progressive country."

Medicare is the most cost-effective healthcare program currently available in this country. This is because it does not have to bear the burden of highly-paid CEO's, dividends to investors, advertising for new customers and all the other costs associated with private insurance companies. It has been fought and libeled by private industry since it was first proposed in 1945 by Harry Truman.

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Mr. Ryan, in his budget proposal, framed this debate as a "moral responsibility." It is. How moral is it to remove our most vulnerable citizens from access to health care?

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