

Republican Party Platform (2016)

Preserving Medicare and Medicaid

More than 100 million Americans depend on Medicare or Medicaid for their healthcare; with our population aging, that number will increase. To preserve Medicare and Medicaid, the financing of these important programs must be brought under control before they consume most of the federal budget, including national defense. The good news is that it can be done, and it can be done without endangering the elderly and the needy who depend on those programs. We intend to save Medicare by modernizing it, empowering its participants, and putting it on a secure financial footing. We will preserve the promise of Medicaid as well by making that program, designed for 1965 medicine, a vehicle for good health in an entirely new era.

Medicare's long-term debt is in the trillions, and it is funded by a workforce that is shrinking relative to the size of future beneficiaries. Obamacare worsened the situation — and imperiled seniors — by imposing hundreds of billions of dollars in cuts to Medicare providers to pay for its new spending. When a vital program is so clearly headed for a train wreck, it's time to put it on a more secure track. That is why we propose these reforms: Impose no changes for persons 55 or older. Give others the option of traditional Medicare or transition to a premium-support model designed to strengthen patient choice, promote cost-saving competition among providers, and better guard against the fraud and abuse that now diverts billions of dollars every year away from patient care. Guarantee to every enrollee an income-adjusted contribution toward a plan of their choice, with catastrophic protection. Without disadvantaging present retirees or those nearing retirement, set a more realistic age for eligibility in light of today's longer life span.

This is an agenda to improve healthcare, not just to manage its costs. We reject the Democrats' approach of rationing inherent in Obamacare. We recognize the de facto rationing of healthcare caused by reduced access to doctors who increasingly opt out of participating in Medicare and Medicaid. We will not accept that or any other approach which denies care — or lowers its quality — for America's elderly.

Medicaid presents related, but somewhat different challenges. As the dominant force in the health market with regard to long-term care, births, and persons with mental illness, it is the next frontier of welfare reform. It is simply too big and too flawed to be administered from Washington. Most of the vaunted expansion of health insurance coverage under Obamacare actually has been an unprecedented expansion of the Medicaid rolls in many states. We applaud the Republican governors and state legislators who have undertaken the hard work of modernizing Medicaid. We will give them a free hand to do so by block-granting the program without strings. Their initiatives — whether premium supports for purchasing insurance, refundable tax credits, alternatives to hospitalization for chronic patients, disease prevention activities, and other innovations — are the best strategy for preserving Medicaid for those who need it the most. Block granting Medicaid is particularly needed to address mental health care. Mental illness affects people from all walks of life, but there has been little success in developing effective system-wide medical models for addressing mental health. For a variety of unique reasons, government is often the first frontier for people experiencing mental health problems — from first responders who deal with crises to publicly funded mental health facilities and prisons where large numbers of inmates suffer from mental illnesses. Using block grants would allow states to experiment with different systems to address mental health and develop successful models to be replicated in states across the nation. The current federally dictated mental health care regime is wasteful and ineffective,

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and moving to a block grant approach would allow for state and local governments to create solutions for individuals and families in desperate need of help in addressing mental illness. We respect the states' authority and flexibility to exclude abortion providers from federal programs such as Medicaid and other healthcare and family planning programs so long as they continue to perform or refer for elective abortions or sell the body parts of aborted children.

Saving Social Security (Top)

We reject the old maxim that Social Security is the "Third Rail" of American politics, deadly for anyone who would change it. The Democratic Party still treats it that way, even though everyone knows that its current course will lead to a financial and social disaster. Younger Americans have lost all faith in the program and expect little return for what they are paying into it. As the party of America's future, we accept the responsibility to preserve and modernize a system of retirement security forged in an old industrial era beyond the memory of most Americans. Current retirees and those close to retirement can be assured of their benefits. Of the many reforms being proposed, all options should be considered to preserve Social Security. As Republicans, we oppose tax increases and believe in the power of markets to create wealth and to help secure the future of our Social Security system. Saving Social Security is more than a challenge. It is our moral obligation to those who trusted in the government's word.