



Republican Plan Puts Special Interests Ahead of Rhode Island Seniors Health Care

The Republican budget would rig the rules in favor of special interests and against millions of seniors who worked hard to earn Medicare benefits. For the fifth budget in a row, Republicans have chosen tax breaks for millionaires and big corporations instead of preserving the Medicare guarantee. Rather than take on special interests, the Republican budget sticks seniors with a higher health care bill.

16,337 Rhode Island seniors would pay more for prescription drugs next year. The Republican plan would re-open the “donut hole,” forcing seniors to pay the full cost of their prescription drugs if their yearly drug expenses are more than \$2,960 for the year. Under the Republican plan, more than 16,337 Rhode Island seniors reaching the prescription drug “donut hole” would pay an average of \$818 more in prescription drug costs in 2015 and approximately \$11,139 more between now and 2022 than under current law. [Senate Republican Budget, 3/18/15; HHS, [2/24/15](#); [2/24/15](#)]

146,201 Rhode Island seniors would be forced to pay for preventative health services. By repealing health reform, the Republican plan will require that the 146,201 Rhode Island seniors who utilize free preventative services currently covered by Medicare in 2013, be required to pay deductibles, co-insurance, and copayments for certain services, including cancer screenings and annual wellness visits. [Senate Republican Budget, 3/18/15; HHS, [2/24/15](#); [2/24/15](#)]

Republican budget slashes \$1.1 billion in health care for Rhode Island seniors, cutting nursing home care. The Republicans budget slashes \$1.1 billion in nursing home care and other health care services for seniors and the disabled. Over 59,900 Rhode Island seniors and disabled currently rely on Medicaid for their long-term care needs. The draconian cuts included in the Republican budget could have a devastating impact on the 84 certified nursing homes in Rhode Island that serve 8,221 seniors and disabled individuals, with more than half relying on Medicaid as their primary payer. As a result, nursing homes would be forced to slash services, turn away seniors, or close their doors. [Senate Republican Budget, 3/18/15; Wall Street Journal, [3/18/15](#); CBO, [3/20/12](#); Kaiser Family Foundation, [accessed 3/17/15](#)]

Under the House Republican Budget, 162,350 Rhode Island seniors would be forced out of traditional Medicare and into a voucher program. Under the House Republican plan to end Medicare as we know it, all Rhode Island seniors will receive a voucher instead of guaranteed benefits under traditional Medicare beginning in 2024. For the 162,350 Rhode Islanders aged 45-54 at the time of the most recent Census, the value of their vouchers would be capped at growth levels that are lower than the projected increases in health care costs. Private insurance plans will aggressively pursue the healthiest, least expensive enrollees, thereby allowing Medicare – currently the lifeline for 188,502 Rhode Island seniors – to “wither on the vine.” [House Budget committee, [3/17/15](#); Census, [accessed on 3/15/15](#); New York Times, [7/20/96](#); HHS, [3/10/15](#)]