

Resource 3 (1 of 3)**Presidential Viewpoints on Medicare**

All quotations, except where otherwise noted, are from The American Presidency Project (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>).

William J. Clinton

Let me be clear: There will also be no new cuts in benefits for Medicare. As we move toward the 4th year, with the explosion in health care costs, as I said, projected to account for 50 percent of the growth of the deficit between now and the year 2000, there must be planned cuts in payments to providers, to doctors, to hospitals, to labs, as a way of controlling health care costs. But I see these only as a stopgap until we can reform the entire health care system. If you'll help me do that, we can be fair to the providers and to the consumers of health care. Let me repeat this, because I know it matters to a lot of you on both sides of the aisle. This plan does not make a recommendation for new cuts in Medicare benefits for any beneficiary.

—Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on Administration Goals (February 17, 1993)

And even as we enact savings in these programs, we must have a common commitment to preserve the basic protections of Medicare and Medicaid, not just to the poor but to people in working families, including children, people with disabilities, people with AIDS, senior citizens in nursing homes. In the past 3 years, we've saved \$15 billion just by fighting health care fraud and abuse. We have all agreed to save much more. We have all agreed to stabilize the Medicare Trust Fund. But we must not abandon our fundamental obligations to the people who need Medicare and Medicaid. America cannot become stronger if they become weaker.

—Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union (January 23, 1996)

George W. Bush

The American system of medicine is a model of skill and innovation, with a pace of discovery that is adding good years to our lives. Yet for many people, medical care costs too much, and many have no health coverage at all. These problems will not be solved with a nationalized health care system that dictates coverage and rations care.

Instead, we must work toward a system in which all Americans have a good insurance policy, choose their own doctors, and seniors and low-income Americans receive the help they need. Instead of bureaucrats and trial lawyers and HMOs, we must put doctors and nurses and patients back in charge of American medicine.

Health care reform must begin with Medicare. Medicare is the binding commitment of a caring society. We must renew that commitment by giving seniors access to preventive medicine and new drugs that are transforming health care in America.

Seniors happy with the current Medicare system should be able to keep their coverage just the way it is. And just like you, the Members of Congress, and your staffs and other Federal employees, all seniors should have the choice of a health care plan that provides prescription drugs....

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To improve our health care system, we must address one of the prime causes of higher cost, the constant threat that physicians and hospitals will be unfairly sued. Because of excessive litigation, everybody pays more for health care, and many parts of America are losing fine doctors. No one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. I urge the Congress to pass medical liability reform.

—Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union (January 28, 2003)

And finally, to keep this economy strong, we must take on the challenge of entitlements. Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid are commitments of conscience, and so it is our duty to keep them permanently sound. Yet we're failing in that duty. And this failure will one day leave our children with three bad options: huge tax increases; huge deficits; or huge and immediate cuts in benefits. Everyone in this Chamber knows this to be true, yet somehow we have not found it in ourselves to act. So let us work together and do it now. With enough good sense and good will, you and I can fix Medicare and Medicaid and save Social Security.

—Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union (January 23, 2007)

Barack H. Obama

Starting in 2011, we are prepared to freeze Government spending for 3 years. Spending related to our national security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security will not be affected. But all other discretionary Government programs will. Like any cash-strapped family, we will work within a budget to invest in what we need and sacrifice what we don't. And if I have to enforce this discipline by veto, I will.

—Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union (January 27, 2010)

We can't get to the \$4 trillion in savings that we need by just cutting the 12 percent of the budget that pays for things like medical research and education funding and food inspectors and the weather service. And we can't just do it by making seniors pay more for Medicare. So we're going to need to look at the whole budget, as I said several months ago. And we've got to eliminate waste wherever we find it and make some tough decisions about worthy priorities.

And that means trimming the defense budget, while still meeting our security needs. It means we'll have to tackle entitlements, as long as we keep faith with seniors and children with disabilities by maintaining the fundamental security that Medicare and Medicaid provide. . . .

So the bottom line is this: Any agreement to reduce our deficit is going to require tough decisions and balanced solutions. And before we ask our seniors to pay more for health care, before we cut our children's education, before we sacrifice our commitment to the research and innovation that will help create more jobs in the economy, I think it's only fair to ask an oil company or a corporate jet owner that has done so well to give up a tax break that no other business enjoys. I don't think that's real radical. I think the majority of Americans agree with that.

—Press Conference by the President (June 29, 2011)

Source: Social Security Administration. (2011). Special collection: Presidential statements. Retrieved from <http://www.ssa.gov/history/presstmts.html>

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We know that our country is stronger when we can count on affordable health insurance and Medicare and Social Security. When we protect our kids from toxic dumping and mercury pollution. When there are rules to make sure we aren't taken advantage of by credit card companies and mortgage lenders and financial institutions. And we know these rules aren't just good for seniors, or kids, or consumers—they're good for business, too. They're part of what makes the market work.

. . .

And as long as I'm President of the United States, I will never allow Medicare to be turned into a voucher that would end the program as we know it. We will not go back to the days when our citizens spent their golden years at the mercy of private insurance companies. We will reform Medicare—not by shifting the cost of care to seniors, but by reducing the spending that isn't making people healthier.

—Campaign Address in Ohio, May 5, 2012

And a great country keeps the promises it makes. Today, we're often told that Medicare and Medicaid are in crisis. But that's usually a political excuse to cut their funding, privatize them, or phase them out entirely—all of which would undermine their core guarantee. The truth is, these programs aren't in crisis. Nor have they kept us from cutting our deficits by two-thirds since I took office. What is true is that every month, another 250,000 Americans turn 65 years old, and become eligible for Medicare. And we all deserve a health care system that delivers efficient, high-quality care. So to keep these programs strong, we'll have to make smart changes over time, just like we always have.

Today, we're actually proving that's possible. The Affordable Care Act has already helped secure Medicare's funding for another 13 years. The Affordable Care Act has saved more than nine million folks on Medicare 15 billion dollars on their prescription medicine. It has expanded Medicaid to help cover 12.8 million more Americans, and to help more seniors live independently. And we're moving our health care system toward models that reward the quality of the care you receive, not the quantity of care you receive. That means healthier Americans and a healthier federal budget.

—Weekly Address, Medicare and Medicaid 50th Anniversary, August 1, 2015