

Congressman Rothman Celebrates Medicare's 45 Years

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CONTACT: Aaron Keyak

office: (202) 225-5061

cell: (202) 905-6361

email: aaron.keyak@mail.house.gov

Washington, DC – Today marks the 45th anniversary of the enactment of Medicare. President Lyndon Johnson signed Medicare into law on July 30, 1965 and the program was launched on July 1, 1966. Congressman Steve Rothman released the following statement:

The 45th Anniversary of the enactment of Medicare is both an opportunity for us to recognize Medicare's essential role in sustaining a higher quality of life for millions of American seniors and to stand up against those who seek to destroy Medicare as we know it.

Medicare is one of America's most important and successful programs that has worked extremely well for our seniors. Before it was implemented 45 years ago, nearly half of our nation's seniors had no health insurance, and nearly 35 percent lived in poverty. Today, Medicare ensures access to quality, affordable health care to America's seniors that has made longer, healthier lives possible for millions of Americans. Since coming to Congress, I have successfully fought to protect and strengthen this important program.

On April 15, 2011, the Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives voted, 235-193, to end Medicare as we know it for Americans who are currently under the age of 55. Their plan would turn Medicare into a "voucher" program, giving seniors coupons to purchase insurance in the private market, raising the eligibility age to 67, and repealing the new benefits given to seniors under the health care reform law, including provisions that closed the "donut hole" in Part D. Under the Republican plan, the average senior would lose the guarantee of lifetime coverage and see their out-of-pocket health care costs double to \$12,150 per year, \$6,400 more than today — not including co-pays.

We certainly have more work to do to ensure that Medicare will be available for future generations, but killing Medicare as we know it is not a way to save this essential program. Leaving our seniors to fend for themselves in the private market, all while maintaining tens of billions of dollars in tax subsidies to Big Oil and the ultra-wealthiest is not an acceptable solution.

On this Anniversary of the enactment of Medicare, we must rededicate ourselves to fighting to make sure that this life-saving program is secured and protected.

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