

## Lies and Misleading Statements by President Trump in USA Today OpEd, October 10, 2018

President Trump wrote an opinion article for USA Today on October 10<sup>th</sup> regarding “Medicare-for-All” in which almost every sentence contained a misleading statement or a falsehood. The Washington Post, Politico and other fact checkers have debunked most of these. A summary follows.

President Trump Statement	Response by Fact Checkers
<p>“Democrats have already harmed seniors by slashing Medicare by more than \$800 billion over 10 years to pay for Obamacare.”</p>	<p>The Affordable Care Act (ACA) reduced payment rates and the rate of increase in Medicare payments to providers (NOT consumers) by about \$800 billion over 10 years. It also levied a tax on families making over \$250,000 to help finance Medicare. The law also was estimated to cut nearly \$200 billion in expenses. The net result was that the Medicare “insolvency” date was extended by 12 years.</p>
<p>Medicare “was created for seniors and paid for by seniors their entire lives.”</p>	<p>While it’s true that seniors have been paying into Medicare for their entire working lives, they will get far more back in benefits than they put in, meaning that younger workers have been subsidizing seniors’ benefits. On paper at least, the Sanders “Medicare for All” plan would improve benefits for seniors, not take them away. With this plan, deductibles would be eliminated and services not currently covered like dental would be covered. There are several other versions, including proposals more limited in scope (such as “Medicare-X”) that would simply offer a Medicare option as a buy-in.</p>
<p>“We are now seeing health insurance premiums coming down.”</p>	<p>Premiums have continued to increase on average, just at a lower rate than in the past. Trump references an article about the cost of “benchmark” plans under the ACA falling 2 percent in 2019 but that the decline occurred after ACA premiums rose significantly in 2018 due to uncertainty about what the Trump administration would do with the law.</p>
<p>“As a candidate, I promised that we would protect coverage for patients with pre-existing conditions and create new health care insurance options that would lower premiums.”</p>	<p>Trump made this promise, but broke it. He supported Republican plans that would have weakened protections for individuals with preexisting conditions. His administration also has refused to defend the ACA against a lawsuit that would undermine those protections. In effect, the Trump administration no longer supports a provision of the ACA that makes it possible for people to buy insurance if they have preexisting health conditions.</p>
<p>“The Democrats’ plan would eviscerate Medicare.”</p>	<p>Trump’s link goes to a New York Times article that says the opposite. With the baby-boom generation retiring at a rate of 10,000 people per day, there is significant pressure on the long-term financing of the program because fewer workers will be supporting more retirees. If the trust fund is depleted, that means the government would not be able to cover 100 percent of estimated expenses. Yet because of Trump’s tax cut, the budget deficit is soaring even as the economy is booming, in contrast to previous periods of under-4-percent unemployment. That leaves the government less prepared to deal with the consequences of baby-boom retirements.</p>

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<p>“The Democrats' plan means that after a life of hard work and sacrifice, seniors would no longer be able to depend on the benefits they were promised.”</p>	<p>As noted, the Sanders plan in theory would expand benefits for seniors. The bill would also get rid of nearly all cost-sharing requirements in the program. Beneficiaries could go to the doctor or hospital without having to pay any money out of their pocket. The program would require co-payments for certain prescription drugs.</p>
<p>President Trump Statement</p>	<p>Response by Fact Checkers</p>
<p>“Seniors would lose access to their favorite doctors.”</p>	<p>This is a scare scenario. Under Medicare for All, there would be no provider networks, so everyone would have access to whatever physician or hospital they choose.</p>
<p>“Democrats would give total power and control over seniors’ health care decisions to the bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.”</p>	<p>There would be considerably more government control over payments to providers. That’s how Medicare works today. Potentially, the power of a centralized buying of drugs should result in significantly reduced drug costs. This is how it works in other countries and why pharmaceutical lobbyists hate this idea.</p>
<p>“The new Democrats are radical socialists who want to model America’s economy after Venezuela.”</p>	<p>Venezuela is collapsing after years of near-dictatorship and squandering of oil wealth. No Democratic leader has pointed to Venezuela as an economic model. While some might describe Medicare or Medicaid as socialism, because the government is providing health insurance to citizens, the health industry remains in private hands. The government doesn’t control the production of health care, they merely regulate some elements and reimburse providers and consumers for their health care costs.</p>
<p>Democrats have an “absolute commitment to end enforcement of our immigration laws by abolishing ICE. That means millions more would cross our borders illegally and take advantage of health care paid for by American taxpayers.”</p>	<p>Trump is misleading on both issues. Immigrants in the country illegally are ineligible for Medicare and non-emergency Medicaid. They also can’t get subsidies under the ACA, or buy coverage through the exchanges. Also, some immigrants in the US illegally do pay federal income taxes, contributing to the Social Security Trust Funds even though they can’t benefit. Some Democrats have been calling to abolish ICE, but it’s not a widely held position. Most Democrats say the agency should be reformed, not abolished.</p>
<p>“Democrats will seek to slash budgets for seniors’ Medicare, Social Security and defense.”</p>	<p>Trump proposed \$350 billion in net Medicare cuts in his budget – and there were about \$540 billion in Medicare cuts assumed in the House GOP budget plan. Democrats generally have pushed to expand benefits, not cut them.</p>
<p>Medicare for All “would establish a government-run, single-payer health care system that eliminates all private and employer-based health care plans and would cost an astonishing \$32.6 trillion during its first 10 years.”</p>	<p>Trump is citing a study by the Mercatus Center of George Mason University of a health care plan proposed by Sen. Bernie Sanders. The study predicted a \$32.6 trillion rise in federal spending over a 10-year period ending in 2031. The same study also forecast, however, that total health care spending would fall by about \$2 trillion. Under the Sanders plan, Americans would in the aggregate pay a lot more to the government to fund their health care, but they’d also pay less overall than they’re paying now. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation analysis said some people will pay more while others would pay less.</p>

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<p>One effect of Medicare for All would be "outlawing the ability of Americans to enroll in private and employer-based plans."</p>	<p>Private plans would be going away, because everyone who currently has them would get Medicare coverage instead. There wouldn't be a need for Medigap plans, which are private plans that currently pay for items that Medicare doesn't cover.</p>
<p>"The Democratic plan would inevitably lead to the massive rationing of health care."</p>	<p>There's ample evidence that Americans pay more for the same services than in other countries, and while every health care system struggles, none are in collapse. Also, there's evidence of overtreatment in America. Estimates say between 20 to 30 percent of care is unnecessary and may leave patients worse off.</p>