

For Immediate Release
Thursday, May 05, 2011
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AS HOUSE GOP WAFFLES ON MEDICARE, SEN. BROWN LEADS 50 SENS. IN LETTER EXPRESSING SOLID OPPOSITION TO MEDICARE PRIVATIZATION

As House Speaker Insists Medicare Privatization is Still on the Table and House Majority Leader Signals that GOP Won't Win Medicare Privatization Debate, Brown Sends Letters Confirming Cantor Prediction

Brown Forwards to House Majority Leader Letter Signed by 50 Senators; Urges House Republicans to Back off Privatization Plan Passed Last Month

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Following [House Speaker John Boehner's insistence that Medicare privatization is still on the table](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-pn-boehner-medicare-20110505,0,1843175.story) (<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-pn-boehner-medicare-20110505,0,1843175.story>) and Majority Leader Eric Cantor's waffling on Medicare, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) led a group of 50 Senators in signing a letter to President Obama expressing their opposition to the plan. Brown forwarded a copy of the letter to Cantor today to confirm that the Republican Medicare privatization plan is dead on arrival in the Senate.

“Your conclusion was correct that House Republicans ‘need to look elsewhere’ after President Obama ‘excoriated’ the proposal you and your Republican colleagues adopted to privatize Medicare through a voucher system,” **Brown** wrote in a letter to Cantor. “Americans don’t want to destroy Medicare in order to give even more tax cuts to millionaires.”

“While I am sure you are under pressure from your caucus to defend that misguided vote rather than to move away from it, I urge you to maintain the position you took yesterday as reported by *The Washington Post*,” **Brown** continued. “If you need further proof that the House Republican plan is a non-starter, I urge you to review the enclosed letter.”

Brown forwarded Cantor a copy of a letter he circulated which was signed by 48 Senators. The letter expressed firm opposition to Medicare privatization.

“The House Republican budget for Fiscal Year 2012 would end Medicare as we know it and throw seniors into the private market with no more than an insufficient voucher to offset the rising cost of private health insurance,” **the group of 50 senators** wrote. “So-called ‘premium support’ – giving seniors a voucher of approximately \$8,000 as proposed by the Republican budget – is a reckless and irresponsible way to address the health care needs of older Americans. And it is an unacceptable means by which to finance tax cuts for those who are earning ten times or more than the retirement income of the average Medicare recipient.”

The text of the letter signed by 50 Senators, along with the text of Brown's cover letter to Cantor, can be found below:

*Representative Eric Cantor
Majority Leader
303 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515*

Dear Majority Leader Cantor:

Your conclusion was correct that House Republicans "need to look elsewhere" after President Obama "excoriated" the proposal you and your Republican colleagues adopted to privatize Medicare through a voucher system. Americans don't want to destroy Medicare in order to give even more tax cuts to millionaires.

While I am sure you are under pressure from your caucus to defend that misguided vote rather than to move away from it, I urge you to maintain the position you took yesterday as reported by The Washington Post. The two parties can and must work together to reduce the deficit, but not if Republicans maintain their demand to end Medicare as we know it. If you need further proof that the House Republican plan is a non-starter, I urge you to review the enclosed letter.

Sincerely,

*Sherrod Brown
United States Senator*

*The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500*

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to commend you for your opposition to turning Medicare into a voucher system as proposed in the House Republican's FY2012 budget. Since the enactment of Medicare in 1965, America's seniors have no longer lived in fear of losing affordable, comprehensive health insurance when they retire. Unfortunately, some in Congress want to dismantle Medicare in order to help offset the costs of tax cuts for the very wealthiest in our country.

The House Republican budget for Fiscal Year 2012 would end Medicare as we know it and throw seniors into the private market with no more than an insufficient voucher to offset the rising cost of private health insurance. So-called "premium support" – giving seniors a voucher of

approximately \$8,000 as proposed by the Republican budget – is a reckless and irresponsible way to address the health care needs of older Americans. And it is an unacceptable means by which to finance tax cuts for those who are earning ten times or more than the retirement income of the average Medicare recipient.

Seniors, who have paid into the system their entire working lives, deserve affordable, secure health coverage upon retirement. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), in the first year of the voucher program, out-of-pocket expenses for seniors would double under the Republican plan to more than \$12,500 annually. For seniors on a fixed income, a doubling of out-of-pocket expenses is simply unaffordable, particularly when the average Social Security benefit is only \$14,000 per year.

The Republican budget proposal would not keep pace with the rate of inflation for health care, meaning seniors would pay ever higher out-of-pocket costs. Under the proposal, the annual increase for the vouchers will fall short of the actual rate of inflation for health care – meaning out-of-pocket expenses for seniors will continue to soar. And to make matters worse, the Republican budget would repeal the only credible means of restraining health care costs – the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

While deficit reduction is essential, balancing the budget by dismantling Medicare is both unfair to hard-working Americans and counterproductive. Seniors who are unable to afford Medicare or its equivalent will skip preventive services, not take necessary medication, and delay treatment leading to potentially undetected illnesses and more expensive care. If Medicare is turned into a voucher system and the health reform law is dismantled, millions of seniors will be left under- or uninsured. This will add to the burden on our nation's already overwhelmed emergency rooms and result in increased demands on Medicaid as seniors exhaust their life savings.

Before the passage of Medicare, only half of America's seniors had health insurance, and most of those with insurance only had coverage for inpatient hospital costs. Additionally, approximately 30 percent of seniors lived below the poverty line before Medicare. Now, only 1.8 percent lack health coverage and less than 9 percent live below the poverty line. We cannot afford to reverse these gains through the ultimate form of rationing health care for seniors: the replacement of Medicare as we know it with insufficient vouchers for private health coverage.

We urge you to protect America's seniors and oppose any attempts to dismantle Medicare.

Sincerely,

*Senator Sherrod Brown
Senator Max Baucus
Senator Mark Begich
Senator Jack Reed
Senator Barbara Mikulski
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Daniel Kahikina Akaka
Senator Jeff Bingaman
Senator Bernard Sanders
Senator Robert Menendez*

*Senator Harry Reid
Senator Jon Tester
Senator Jeff Merkley
Senator Patrick Leahy
Senator Benjamin L. Cardin
Senator John F. Kerry
Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator Charles E. Schumer
Senator Mark Udall
Senator Debbie Stabenow*

Senator Kent Conrad
Senator Tim Johnson
Senator Mary Landrieu
Senator Dick Durbin
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
Senator Patty Murray
Senator Daniel Inouye
Senator Michael Bennet
Senator Claire McCaskill
Senator Robert P. Casey Jr.
Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Tom Udall
Senator Ben Nelson
Senator Maria Cantwell
Senator Mark Pryor

Senator Ron Wyden
Senator Richard Blumenthal
Senator Frank R. Lautenberg
Senator Al Franken
Senator Tom Harkin
Senator Chris Coons
Senator Mark Warner
Senator Joe Manchin
Senator John D. Rockefeller IV
Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Senator Herb Kohl
Senator Jim Webb
Senator Kay Hagan
Senator Bill Nelson

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