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***AARP Leads Call to Prevent Cuts to Medicare Benefits  
Raising Medicare Age Would Shift Higher Health Care Costs to Seniors***

WASHINGTON – AARP and 20 other organizations representing millions of older Americans today sent a letter to Congressional leaders urging them to reject any policy proposals that would increase the age of eligibility for Medicare. The letter continues the organization’s efforts to stop Congress from cutting Medicare benefits for younger retirees and increasing costs for all seniors.

Raising the Medicare eligibility age would increase out-of-pocket spending for young retirees, increase premiums for people already in Medicare and increase health care costs for businesses because workers would stay on employer health plans longer. In short, overall health care costs would increase, while coverage would likely decrease.

“We’re fighting to stop Congress from making a deal that would deny seniors their Medicare benefits until they turn 67, forcing them to pay over \$2000 more per year for health care,” said Nancy LeaMond, Executive Vice President for AARP. “Rather than simply shifting costs to seniors and employers, we need to lower health care costs throughout the health care system.”

*Text of the letter from AARP and other organizations follows:*

“The undersigned organizations, who represent millions of older Americans, urge you to reject any policy proposals that would increase the age of eligibility for Medicare. Increasing the age of eligibility for Medicare does not address the high cost of health care, but simply shifts increased costs onto beneficiaries and other payers of health care – including employers and states – who may be unable to shoulder these extra financial burdens.

“Increased health care costs for those aged 65 to 67 may put coverage and care out of reach for many. Some groups in particular, such as single women and minorities, may be disproportionately affected. Roughly one quarter of individuals aged 65 and older live in families that depend on Social Security benefits for 90 percent or more of their income. In June 2011, the average annual Social Security benefit for all retired workers was approximately \$14,000. Women, on average, tend to rely on Social Security even more – a majority of older women depend on Social Security benefits for over half of their family income.

“Given their limited incomes and health status, denying 65 and 66 year-olds Medicare coverage will make it much more difficult for them to find affordable health insurance – especially for those without employer-based coverage. As a result, when these individuals ultimately enter the Medicare program, they are more apt to be a less healthy and more costly population, thus increasing overall

Medicare costs, as well as premiums for all beneficiaries.

“In many states, insurance companies are allowed to charge older Americans several times what they would charge younger people. According to recent analysis from the Kaiser Family Foundation, two-thirds of individuals impacted by the proposal to increase the eligibility age would face more out-of-pocket costs, on average, than they would have paid under Medicare.

“In addition, many studies have demonstrated that increasing the age of eligibility for Medicare will shift more costs to employers. For example, businesses offering retiree health insurance who now pay secondary to Medicare for those who are 65 and older would be required to provide full health coverage for those aged 65 and 66, leading to far greater employer costs. Furthermore, many people would be forced to delay retirement in order to access affordable healthcare coverage while they wait for Medicare, adding a higher cost population into employer insurance risk pools. As a result, not only would employer costs increase, but so would premiums for the entire population covered by an employer’s health benefit. Employers who offer their employees health insurance would find their costs increased, according to one study, by as much as \$4.5 billion.

“In short, health care access would go down, and total U.S. health costs would go up. We therefore strongly urge you to reject ANY proposal to increase the age of eligibility for Medicare.”

Other organizations cosigning the letter include: AFL-CIO; AFSCME; AFT; American Postal Workers Union; B'nai B'rith International; Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.; Families USA; International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America, UAW; LeadingAge; Medicare Rights Center; National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA); National Alliance for Caregiving; National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a); National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA); OWL – The Voice of Midlife and Older Women; PHI - Quality Care through Quality Jobs; SAGE; The American Society on Aging; The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care; and Wider Opportunities for Women.

For the full-text of the letter, please contact AARP Media Relations by phone (202-434-2560) or by email ([media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org)).

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a membership that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with nearly 35 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's millions of members and Americans 50+; AARP VIVA, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.