

<http://rockefeller.senate.gov>
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 5, 2011

Contact: Abigail McDonough
202-224-6101

ROCKEFELLER SAYS NEW REPUBLICAN BUDGET PLAN HURTS HEALTH CARE FOR STRUGGLING FAMILIES & SENIORS

Out-of-touch House Republican Proposal Favors the Wealthy at the Expense of Middle Class Families

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Jay Rockefeller today issued the following statement in response to a House Republican budget plan that calls for vastly scaling back Medicaid and Medicare, which together provide vital health care to children, low-income families, the elderly and people with disabilities.

“The House Republican’s budget plan shows how out-of-touch they are. They want to give trillions in tax benefits to wealthy corporations that keep profits offshore, while slashing basic health care for children, seniors, and people with disabilities. This is not just foolish – it’s cruel. The Republican budget would end Medicare as we know it and prevent millions of Americans from getting affordable health care. It would shift the financial burden on to states and already struggling families all across the country. In West Virginia, nearly 380,000 people were enrolled in Medicare in 2010 and over 320,000 were enrolled in Medicaid. Anybody who has ever struggled to pay for a nursing home, or to care for a sick or aging relative at home, should be watching the Republican’s every move – they are gutting your Medicare and Medicaid support and giving the money to big business and the wealthy.”

Background:

Senator Rockefeller has consistently supported efforts to reduce the deficit. But he has insisted that those proposals do not target West Virginia families and instead focus on smart spending cuts and making the tax code more fair.

Medicare provides vital health care services to 48 million seniors. Before Medicare, nearly 50 percent of seniors in the United States were uninsured. The Republican budget would end Medicare as we know it, converting Medicare into a privatized voucher-type program that will leave seniors to pay out-of-pocket for many expensive health care costs. People who turn 65 after 2020 would have no guaranteed set of health benefits and no help when the cost of health care increases faster than the dollar value of the voucher. Seniors and people with disabilities would be forced to pay the difference, or go without care. Millions of seniors living on a fixed-monthly income will not be able to afford these higher costs.

The House Republican budget calls for \$1 trillion in cuts to Medicaid and turns it into a block grant program – forcing state governments to pick up the rest of the tab, or cut services to beneficiaries, as the cost of care increases. The added financial burden would be pushed onto Medicaid recipients, such as seniors and people with disabilities, to pay more that they can’t afford or risk ending their health care coverage all together. After almost 50 years, Medicaid is still a life-saving part of our nation’s health system – covering 40 percent of the births, 50 percent of long-term care, and, along with the Children’s Health Insurance Program, 34 percent of the children in our country. Medicaid is also an economic engine supporting millions of home-grown jobs at hospitals, nursing homes, community health centers, and doctor’s offices. It was estimated that a similar proposal to cut Medicaid would cost 3 million jobs from 2013 to 2020.