

Protect Our Care: Top ways Trump has sabotaged seniors' health care

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MILWAUKEE, WI — As President Trump makes a last-ditch effort ahead of the election to appeal to seniors, his record on health care speaks for itself. From the beginning of his presidency, Trump has [waged a war on seniors](#). As the nation is continuing to battle a once-in-a-generation health care crisis, it has never been more clear that President Trump's sabotage of seniors' health care is especially dangerous. [80 percent](#) of U.S. coronavirus deaths have been among people aged 65 and older, and more than [84,000 people](#) have died in nursing homes nationwide. Meanwhile, Trump has continued his attacks on Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) — even as millions of seniors and older adults rely on these essential programs for care. Despite Trump's repeated promises to protect seniors, his actions speak louder than his words. The danger of electing Donald Trump for a second term cannot be overstated. Now, more than ever, seniors' health care is on the ballot.

Trump's Failed Coronavirus Response Has Uniquely Impacted Seniors

The United States Has The Worst Coronavirus Death Toll In The World — And Eight In Ten Of Those Who Have Lost Their Lives Are Seniors.

According to data from the CDC, roughly eight in ten of those who have lost their lives to coronavirus [were](#) 65 or older.

The White House's Endorsement Of "Herd Immunity" Endangers Senior Citizens. Donald Trump has [embraced](#) the notion of herd immunity, advocating that the virus should spread through younger populations to hasten the end of the pandemic. Trump is operating off of the baseless assertion that the United States can achieve herd immunity if enough young people become infected, and is falsely

claiming that the United States can protect vulnerable populations as it does so. But data suggests that increased spread among younger groups [regularly precedes](#) accelerated spread among seniors — demonstrating that Trump’s plan is just another abdication of responsibility that directly endangers senior citizens.

Donald Trump’s Rallies Have Directly Jeopardized The Health Of Seniors.

Donald Trump has insisted upon hosting dangerous campaign events with seniors or in retirement communities, with no regard for social distancing measures, rising cases, or community spread. Some of these events have [even](#) taken place indoors. Experts widely agree that Trump’s campaign events are dangerous and targeting them toward seniors Trump is deliberately putting their health at risk.

Forty Percent Of Coronavirus Fatalities In The United States Have Been Among Residents And Staff Of Assisted Living Facilities. According to AARP, more than 84,000 residents and staff of nursing homes [have died](#) from COVID-19, representing 40% of all fatalities in the United States. But federal policy has been slow to respond, and even now, cases are rising in these facilities. Nursing homes in [Kentucky](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Illinois](#), [Indiana](#), [New Jersey](#) and [Wisconsin](#) are experiencing surges in cases. At one facility in Kansas, every single resident was [infected](#) this month and ten have died.

- **The Trump Administration Rolled Back Oversight Of Nursing Homes Before The Pandemic.** The Trump administration [cut the size of fines](#) for health violations in nursing homes. Federal records show that the average fine dropped to \$28,405 under Verma’s tenure, down from \$41,260 in 2016. Experts say that for large nursing homes, these smaller fines are merely a “rounding error” giving them less incentive to fix faulty and dangerous practices before someone gets hurt. According to [Toby Edelman](#), a senior policy attorney and expert on nursing home regulation at the Center for Medicare Advocacy, found that the administration has largely pulled back its enforcement of “special focus facilities” -nursing homes cited for a pattern of serious infractions- issuing increasingly small fines even though the government continued to cite them for serious violations.
- **President Trump’s Failure To Ramp Up Testing Allowed Cases To Surge Among Nursing Home Residents.** As coronavirus reached the United States, nursing homes were hard hit after President Trump failed to aggressively ramp up testing. Acute shortages of testing supplies blocked facilities from isolating infected residents, and soon, outbreaks were decimating entire facilities. Months into the pandemic, two-thirds of facilities

[still lacked](#) test kits and supplies. When the Trump administration finally provided rapid tests to nursing homes to facilitate identification of traces, the tests [provided](#) faulty results, and nursing homes were [saddled](#) with the exorbitant costs of replenishing extremely limited supplies.

- **Donald Trump's Failure To Ramp Up Supplies Of Protective Equipment Is Still Endangering Residents At Assisted Care Facilities.** Donald Trump's steadfast refusal to ramp up domestic supplies of protective equipment made infection control at assisted care facilities especially challenging. Unprotected workers unknowingly became infected with the virus, soon spreading it to more and more vulnerable residents. But little has been done to remedy these shortages — even now, every single state has nursing homes that are [reporting](#) less than a one week supply of protective equipment, while roughly a quarter of homes are experiencing a shortage. Meanwhile, [nearly half](#) of US nursing homes have staff infected with the virus.
- **The Trump Administration Isn't Sufficiently Tracking Nursing Home Outbreaks.** Even as infections in nursing homes across the country skyrocketed, the Trump administration [failed to track](#) the number of cases and deaths in nursing homes until more than 100 days after coronavirus was detected in the United States. Experts say more comprehensive data is critical to battling the virus and understanding why it is spreading faster in some nursing homes than others. David Grabowski, professor of health policy at Harvard Medical School, [noted](#) that information-gathering and transparency could help prevent future outbreaks: "It's impossible to fight and contain this virus if we don't know where it's located."

Trump Continues To Attack Medicare

Medicare is a lifeline for seniors across the country. Despite promising to protect Medicare during his campaign, President Trump signed a tax bill that weakened the Medicare Trust Fund and repeatedly sought severe funding cuts for the program in his budget proposals. At the same time, he is refusing commonsense measures to lower drug prices for seniors.

Trump Has Repeatedly Made Clear That If He Wins Re-Election In 2020, He's Going To Cut Medicare. In January 2020, Trump [made it clear](#) he remained open to slashing benefits for vital programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security during an interview with CNBC at the World Economic Forum.

Trump Has Proposed Steep Cuts To Medicare In His Budget Requests.

Despite [repeatedly promising](#) not to cut Medicare, Trump's 2020 budget proposal would have cut more than \$800 billion from Medicare over a decade, or roughly [10 percent](#) of Medicare's funding over the next ten years to help pay for tax cuts to insurance and big drug companies. Most recently, Trump's 2021 budget would have reduced Medicare spending by about [\\$500 billion](#), in addition to more than [\\$1 trillion](#) in cuts to the ACA and Medicaid.

Trump Signed A Tax Bill That Weakened Medicare Funding. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Trump's signature tax law [reduced](#) federal income tax rates, which lowers payroll tax revenues, and repealed the ACA individual mandate penalty, which increases Medicare spending — “both of which adversely affected the solvency of the Medicare Hospital Insurance Trust Fund.”

President Trump And His Republican Allies In Congress Will Not Allow Medicare To Negotiate For Lower Drug Prices Even As The Cost Of Drugs Skyrocket. Though [88 percent](#) of Americans support allowing the federal government to negotiate drug prices for Medicare beneficiaries, Republicans refuse to let Medicare negotiate. In December 2019, House Democrats passed the [Lower Drug Costs Now Act](#) to reduce the price of drugs for every American family by allowing the government to directly negotiate for lower drug prices for people with private insurance as well as Medicare. The bill would save households [\\$158 billion](#) over seven years. Despite his multiple campaign promises to let Medicare negotiate, Trump opposes the House's plan. Meanwhile, more than 4,000 drugs saw price increases averaging [21 percent](#) in 2019, and drug prices are [steadily rising](#) even as the nation fights the coronavirus crisis.

Trump's Efforts To Overturn The ACA Would Come At The Direct Expense Of The Medicare Trust Fund. A significant portion of the tax cuts [resulting](#) from ACA repeal would come “at the direct expense of the Medicare Trust Fund,” according to the Center on Budget and Policy priorities. Meanwhile, overturning the ACA would cut taxes for the top 0.1 percent of earners [by an average of \\$198,000](#), and pharmaceutical companies would pay [\\$2.8 billion](#) less in taxes each year.

Trump Waged A War On Medicaid

More than [7.2 million American seniors](#) and 8.5 million adults aged 50 to 64 have Medicaid coverage. The Medicaid program funds [53 percent](#) of long-term care nationwide, providing critical support for America's seniors relying on home care to meet their daily needs and for those living in

nursing homes.

Trump Wants To Gut The Medicaid Budget. Despite [promising not to cut Medicaid](#) when he ran for office, President Trump has repeatedly asked for steep budget cuts to Medicaid and other essential health programs through his budget proposals. Most recently, Trump sought [more than \\$1 trillion in cuts](#) to Medicaid and the ACA for fiscal year 2021. His budget essentially ends Medicaid expansion by [eliminating](#) the enhanced federal payment and proposes nationwide work requirements, which experts [estimate](#) would cause up to 4 million people to lose coverage.

Trump Has Championed Burdensome Paperwork Requirements. For years, Trump has empowered states to impose red tape and paperwork requirements as part of his ongoing efforts to dismantle Medicaid. Work requirements have been at the center of these efforts. After Arkansas imposed the nation's first work requirements program, more than [18,000](#) residents lost Medicaid coverage. While work requirements have been blocked by a federal judge [several times](#), the Trump administration [keeps fighting](#) to impose these onerous rules in Medicaid. A recent GAO [report](#) found that the administrative costs to implement the failed work requirement programs in five states topped \$400 million. In addition to work requirements, the administration has encouraged states to impose other barriers such as [increased eligibility verification](#) as well as premiums and other cost-sharing.

- **Requiring People To Work To Maintain Medicaid Coverage Is Particularly Burdensome For Older Adults.** Less than half of American adults [ages 55 to 64](#) work. Some are retired, and for many others, chronic health conditions make it [difficult](#) to maintain steady employment.

Trump Continues To Support Medicaid Block Grants. Ahead of the pandemic, the Trump administration [announced](#) guidance that could severely limit state funding for those enrolled in Medicaid expansion. Block grants are a [blatant attempt](#) to limit funding, gut coverage and kick people off the rolls. Importantly, under a block grant, federal funding would no longer necessarily increase in response to a public health emergency like coronavirus, potentially forcing states to limit enrollment or benefits. This could lead to people losing coverage and access to care, undermining prevention and treatment of diseases nationwide.

Trump Wants To Eliminate Medicaid Expansion Through His Texas Lawsuit To Overturn The ACA. If successful, the lawsuit would terminate Medicaid

expansion, threatening to rip away coverage from [15 million](#) people and cut key funding for already-struggling rural hospitals during the pandemic. Research has shown that Medicaid expansion has resulted in healthier people, communities, and economies. One study even found that Medicaid expansion [saved](#) the lives of at least 19,200 older adults.

Trump Is Fighting To Overturn The ACA

Trump notoriously tried and failed multiple times to repeal the Affordable Care Act. All of the repeal bills that went through Congress would have caused millions of Americans to lose their health coverage and raised premiums for millions more. Now the Trump administration has thrown its full support behind a lawsuit that would do the same. If the Republican lawsuit is successful, more than 20 million Americans will lose their coverage and more than 135 million people will lose protections for pre-existing conditions, including the millions of Americans who contracted the coronavirus. The lawsuit will be heard just one week after the election.

Trump's lawsuit would result in devastating coverage losses and higher costs for seniors and older adults. Trump's effort to overturn the ACA threatens to raise seniors' drug costs and impose an "age tax" that would make them pay more for care.

If The ACA Is Struck Down In Court:

- **32 Million Older Adults With Pre-Existing Conditions Will Lose Protections.** [135 million Americans](#) have a pre-existing condition, including [17 million](#) children, [68 million](#) women, and [32 million](#) people aged 55-64. Making matters worse, without the ACA, millions of Americans who have contracted the coronavirus would likely be deemed as [having a pre-existing condition](#) and be at the mercy of their insurance companies who could refuse to pay for needed care.
- **People Over The Age of 50 Would Face A \$4,000 "Age Tax."** Thanks to the Republican lawsuit, insurance companies could charge people over 50 more than younger people. The Affordable Care Act limited the amount older people could be charged to three times more than younger people. If insurers were to charge five times more, as was proposed in the Republican repeal bills, that would add an average "age tax" of [\\$4,124](#) for a 60-year-old in the individual market, according to the AARP.

- **Seniors Will Have To Pay More For Prescription Drugs.** If the Republican lawsuit is successful, seniors will have to pay more for prescription drugs because the Medicare “donut” hole got reopened. From 2010 to 2016, “More than 11.8 million Medicare beneficiaries have received discounts over \$26.8 billion on prescription drugs – an average of \$2,272 per beneficiary,” according to a [January 2017 Centers on Medicare and Medicaid Services report](#).
- **5.6 Million Million Older Adults Aged 50 To 64 Would Become Uninsured.** According to estimates from the Urban Institute, the number of uninsured Americans would increase from 30.8 million to 51.9 million without the ACA. Americans of [all ages](#) would be impacted by coverage losses, but older adults would be hit the hardest, with an increase in uninsurance of 95 percent.
- **Seniors Will No Longer Be Guaranteed Free Preventive Services And Annual Check-Ups.** [60 million people](#) with Medicare have access to free preventive services because of the Affordable Care Act.
- **Seniors Could Once Again See Less Coordinated Care.** Provisions in the ACA encouraged groups of doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers to come together to provide coordinated high-quality care to the Medicare patients they serve. In fact, [8.9 million](#) Medicare beneficiaries are now benefiting from higher quality, more coordinated care.
- **60 Million Medicare Beneficiaries Could Face Higher Costs.** In addition to paying more for preventive care and prescription drugs, Medicare beneficiaries could [face higher premiums](#) without the cost-saving measures implemented under the ACA.