

# Ann Roe: 58 years later, we must still fight to protect Medicare and Medicaid

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At the end of July, Medicare and Medicaid turn 58 years old – that’s nearly six decades of helping seniors and low-income families across the country access the health care and prescription drugs they need to live. But as we celebrate another year of these critical programs, we have to remain vigilant and committed to protecting and improving them for future generations of Americans.

Being born a year after President Johnson signed these programs into law in 1965, I’m fortunate to have never known a world where Medicare and Medicaid don’t exist. But despite their success and the hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites who depend on them for care, I’ve witnessed countless elected officials threaten these benefits or stand in the way of efforts to strengthen them.

Recently, thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, Medicare beneficiaries are seeing even more relief when it comes to prescription drug prices. The law capped insulin costs at \$35, gave Medicare the ability to negotiate drug prices, and established a program that forces drug companies to pay a rebate when they raise prices by more than the rate of inflation. Already thousands of Wisconsinites are benefiting from these improvements to Medicare.

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But if Republicans in Congress, including Rep. Bryan Steil, had their way, many of these benefits could be on the chopping block. Steil opposed the Inflation Reduction

Act, voting to keep drug prices high, and even voted against additional legislation that would've capped the cost of insulin. He also is part of the extreme Republican Study Committee, which recently announced a budget proposal that would roll back the protections in the Inflation Reduction Act and once again prohibit Medicare from negotiating for lower prescription drug prices.

I find it ironic that many of these elected representatives receive and enjoy these benefits themselves and at the same time manage to increase their personal wealth as a public servant.

Congressman Steil and his colleagues in Washington could do even more damage to these programs. This summer, House Republicans are likely to advance a new tax plan that could add \$1 trillion to the deficit thanks to massive handouts to the wealthy and big corporations, which could jeopardize funding for programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and more.

For 58 years, we've lived with the promise of Medicare and Medicaid. Our neighbors, family members, and friends have accessed the care, treatment, and medications they need because of it.

More than ever, we should be demanding that our elected officials work together to strengthen these programs, improve benefits, and ensure every Wisconsinite has affordable and high-quality health care. It's time for Rep. Steil to fight to preserve and protect Medicare and Medicaid to make sure they're here for another 58 years.

*-Ann Roe is a small business owner and advocate for working families in Janesville, Wisconsin.*