

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We salute your leadership in seeking tax fairness for all. Furthermore, we understand the importance of balancing fiscal responsibility with the responsibility to meet fundamental public needs. We certainly agree that the Bush tax cuts should be allowed to expire for the top 2 percent of American taxpayers, returning to the Clinton Administration level. This change would occur automatically if Congress failed to act by the end of the year. Some of our colleagues, who have long questioned the value of Medicare, have urged that in return for allowing these tax rates to return to their prior levels, we should terminate Medicare for millions of seniors. As Minority Leader Pelosi put it so eloquently, “It was their trophy in the talks on the fiscal cliff -- the price they asked seniors to pay before they voted to ask the wealthiest to pay their fair share.” This would be unacceptable.

Raising the Medicare age doesn't cut costs—it simply shifts those costs to those who depend on Medicare, to younger Americans who buy insurance through the new health insurance exchanges, and to states. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that the costs to states and the private sector would be *twice* as large as the savings-- \$11.4 billion in costs versus \$5.7 billion in net federal savings. For our colleagues to consider raising the eligibility age illustrates that their desire has less to do with addressing rising longer health care costs than it does being able to claim an ideological triumph.

As the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities recently concluded on raising the Medicare eligibility age:

“The goal should be to slow the growth of health care costs system-wide, while extending coverage to all Americans. This proposal does just the opposite on both fronts — raising costs system-wide and increasing the ranks of the uninsured.”

Our nation's older Americans have worked a lifetime for the promise of Social Security and Medicare. For those 65- and 66-year-olds who would now be denied the security of Medicare, their out-of-pocket costs would increase by \$3.7 billion. Paying more for their health care isn't the only negative impact on our nation's older Americans. Raising the Medicare eligibility age to 67 would also increase the population of uninsured seniors by at least 270,000 people.

While the House Republican budget phased in this change for those 54 and below, this only delays the pain. And such a phased approach would produce no budget savings for the next decade. It only indicates that this Republican proposal is about ideology, not deficit reduction.

Even though we have made great progress addressing long-term rising health care costs with the passage of the Affordable Health Care Act, and even though the eligibility age for Social Security benefits is gradually increasing, it will do great harm to our economy and millions of seniors to raise the Medicare eligibility age or enact other significant cost-shifting alternatives.

We do understand it is important to meet the challenge of rising health care costs; that is why we were willing to vote for changes to Medicare and in doing so, extended the solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund by almost another decade.

As we continue to work to develop a response to rising health care costs and make Medicare stronger, we urge you in the strongest possible terms against changing the eligibility age of this vital part of retirement security.

Sincerely,

Wayne Dwyer

Tom Z

Frank Kelly

Ernie Brown

Chell R

Eddie Bernice Johnson

Bobby Scott

Yvette D. Clarke

Joe Courtney

Paul Tonko

Jean Schabert Roudy

Suzanne Brown

Al Dente

Sheela

Therese Lachar

DMF

John B. Larson
Carine Brown

Danny R. Davis

J. E. Amos

Bill Parrell Jr

Louise M. Slaughter

Harold A. Watson

John P. Senter

John Lewis

Pat White

Carolyn B. Maloney

Donna F. Edwards

Judy Chu
Pat White

Elijah E. Cummings

Melanie Waters

John Jaramendi

Renee J. Sun

Bennie M. Thompson

+

Melvin L. Watt

Neil Schell

Charles B. Rangel

Adam Schiff

Julius Spence

Ed Cannon

Rud Holt

Barry Clark

Tom R. Kent

Lynn C. Wolsey

Jim M. Brown

Pat A. Brady

Earl Johnson

Jim M. Darvill

Alvin Y. Schweg

~~Mike~~ ~~Walker~~

Ken Miller

Harold Nader

~~Michael~~ ~~Miller~~

Kathy Costor

Kenn Bass

Daniel N. Cicilline

Jim Langevin

John

Rail M. Hijaboo

Alce L. Hastings

Steve Cole

Bayler

Maureen Hurling
Lillian Richardson

John W. Ober
Brad Eller

Marciah L. Ojeda

Bobby J. Pomeroy

Al Owsen

John F. Tracy

Teris O. Matsui

Barbara Lee

Lois Capps

Dwight Moore

John Hurling

Lorella Sanchez

Zee Tobg

Jose J. Napolitano

Wm H. WA

Marcy Kaptur

Betty Sutton

Michael H. Michael

James Clark

Dave Lachak

Tim Ryan

Hansen Clarke