

Emphasize Democrats' Commitment to Protecting Medicare for Generations to Come

WASHINGTON (July 29, 2011) – Today, Members of the House Democratic Caucus Seniors Task Force, led by Caucus Chairman John Larson (CT-01), and Co-Chairs Doris Matsui (CA-05) and Jan Schakowsky (IL-09), issued statements reiterating their commitment to protect Medicare. On the eve of Medicare's 46

th Anniversary, House Republicans want to end Medicare as we know it, while House Democrats continue to fight to protect this critical program:

□ **Chairman John Larson said:** □ “Forty-six years ago, Medicare began as one of the fundamental safety nets protecting middle-class American families. But as we mark Medicare's 46th Anniversary, Republicans in Congress are trying to end that bedrock promise between our government and every American; claiming that's the only way to reduce our deficit, while maintaining billions in tax breaks for oil companies and Wall Street. Democrats won't stand for that! We are fighting to ensure that Medicare is preserved and strengthened so that it can continue to help seniors today and in the future.”

□ **Co-Chair Doris Matsui said:** “Forty-six years ago, President Lyndon Johnson signed the legislation that created Medicare. For the last forty-six years, Democrats have defended Medicare, and we are continuing that fight harder than ever now. We believe that we must preserve and strengthen Medicare for future generations, and understand that this program is an essential component in keeping American families healthy – both physically and financially. As we mark the 46th anniversary of Medicare, Democrats in Congress stand united in our commitment to America's seniors.”

□ **Co-Chair Jan Schakowsky said:** □ “On the 46th Anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid, we find ourselves in a fighting mood – fighting to protect these popular and effective programs.

Many Americans are hanging on – waiting until they turn 65 so that they can finally become eligible for Medicare’s guaranteed coverage. They put off going to the doctor or getting needed prescriptions because they simply cannot afford it. The Republican plan to turn Medicare’s guarantee of benefits into a handful of inadequate vouchers would throw seniors back on the mercy of private insurance companies. We cannot let Medicare become Maybe Care, Sorta Care or I Don’t Care. Protecting Medicare and Medicaid is a non-negotiable priority.”

Rep. Joe Baca (CA-43) said: “Forty-six years ago, Congress voted to create Medicare to ensure that America’s seniors would always have the dignity and economic security of affordable health care. It is essential that all of us recommit ourselves to protecting Medicare from those who would dismantle it. While Republicans have voted numerous times this Congress to end Medicare as we know, Democrats remain committed to safeguarding Medicare and other vital safety net programs for both current seniors and our future generations.”

□ **Rep. Kathy Castor (FL-11) said:** “For 46 years, Medicare has been that fundamental promise to our parents and our grandparents that if they work hard, play by the rules and pay into Medicare, they will be able to live their retirement years in dignity. Now the Republicans are looking to end Medicare as we know it and undermine that fundamental promise. It is time for us to come together for a reasonable solution and still maintain this promise.”

□ **Rep. David Cicilline (RI-01) said:** “Rhode Island seniors and those across the nation deserve a secure retirement and dignity in their later years. It’s really about time our national leaders showed the backbone to defend that.”

□ **Rep. Gerry Connolly (VA-11) said:** “The passage of Medicare marked a major and important change for seniors in our nation. Medicare is one of America’s greatest success stories that has provided health care, stability, and dignity to generations of American seniors. We must be vigilant to protect it from radical proposals like the Ryan plan that would dismantle Medicare and replace it with a private system that would increase costs and reduce services for seniors and the disabled.”

□ **Rep. Mark Critz (PA-12) said:** “Too many people have forgotten what life was like in the United States before Medicare existed. Medicare has given millions of older Americans access to health services that would otherwise be out of reach, and has lifted many out of poverty. We made a promise to provide care to all seniors, and it’s a promise Democrats are committed to keeping.”

□ **Rep. Ted Deutch (FL-19) said:** □ “Millions of America’s seniors languished without basic access to medical care before President Lyndon Johnson signed Medicare into law. The creation of Medicare was based on the simple premise that hardworking Americans deserve to live out their retirement years with the dignity and financial security that comes with quality, affordable health care. Today, 50 million Americans rely on this program, and the American people overwhelmingly support it. In the face of unprecedented Republican attacks on Medicare, Democrats are committed to protecting benefits and preserving the system for generations to come.”

Rep. Raul Grijalva (AZ-07) said: □ “Medicare is not something to ‘put on the table’ as a bargaining chip. It’s literally the difference between life and death for millions of working and retired Americans. Today is a day not just to thank those who created this vital and successful program, but to think ahead to an America that doesn’t take care of its own people in the same way we have for decades. I don’t believe the people of Southern Arizona or the rest of the country want to live in that America. That’s why it’s so important to make a strong stand today and any time Republicans threaten to kill the programs that make our country strong and healthy.”

□ **Rep. Maurice Hinchey (NY-22) said:** □ “Those on the far right have worked to eliminate Medicare ever since Democrats created it 46 years ago. We’re not going to let that happen. Members of the senior’s task force and members of the Democratic Party are going to stand firm for seniors and stop these attacks on this essential and effective program. We’re going to fight with everything we’ve got to protect Medicare so that it serves our country just as well in the next 46 years as it did in the past 46 years, and we’re going to win.”

□ **Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX-30) said:** □ “Tomorrow marks the 46th anniversary of the Medicare program. Medicare, which is arguably our Nation’s most successful and treasured public insurance program, provides a lifeline for our nation’s most vulnerable citizens. Without Medicare coverage all would suffer. Sadly, on the eve of Medicare’s 46th anniversary, Republicans are as determined as ever to end the program. At a time where Americans are struggling to stay afloat in an unstable economy, we should be looking for ways to make health care more affordable – not take it away. Medicare is one of the proudest achievements of the Democratic Party. In the face of these trying economic times, we will continue to protect and preserve Medicare for the millions of Americans who rely on the program for their health care security.”

Rep. Hank Johnson (GA-04) said: “Today, on the 46th anniversary of Medicare, I am grateful for the tremendous progress we have made and am proud to live in a country that honors and values our seniors. In today’s challenging economic climate, seniors are struggling to pay for basic necessities. However, thanks to Medicare, they are still able to receive essential health care services that they otherwise would not be able to afford. As Republican leaders continue their efforts to end Medicare, we must remember the hardship our seniors faced 47 years ago before the creation of this vital program. We must never break the promise of Medicare to our seniors.”

□ **Rep. Nick Rahall (WV-03) said:** “On its 46th anniversary, Medicare remains a lifeline for seniors on fixed incomes. As the House considers legislation to force draconian cuts in Social Security and Medicare, we must resist efforts to require seniors to bear the burden of balancing the budget.”

□ **Rep. Charlie Rangel (NY-15) said:** “Medicare is one of our nation’s greatest programs. For the past 46 years, millions of our nation’s seniors and their families have counted on the government’s promise to provide what they have rightfully earned. It is unconscionable that the Republicans are threatening to end Medicare as we know it. We cannot turn our backs on the elderly who need their healthcare. My Democratic colleagues and I will continue to work to strengthen Medicare’s solvency and ensure that it will continue be there for future generations.”

□ **Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34) said:** “On this historic anniversary, I am proud to live in a country in which seniors and people with disabilities have access to reliable and affordable health care coverage. I vow to continue to honor them by making sure they retain the Medicare coverage that they rely upon and deserve.”

□ **Rep. Paul Tonko (NY-21) said:** “I join with all Americans to celebrate the success of Medicare in providing affordable, quality care for our seniors. Before Medicare, nearly half of our seniors did without health coverage, and now coverage is universal. Medicare has played an enormous role in dramatically reducing the poverty rate among seniors, and has significantly extended the life expectancy of Americans. Creating Medicare was a great achievement for the Democratic Party, and I remain committed to strengthening Medicare and fighting Republican efforts to destroy this program.”

###

CONTACT: [Ellis Brachman](#) (Caucus) 202.225.1400
[Mara Lee](#) (Matsui) 202.225.7163
[Adjoa Adofo](#) (Schakowsky)202.225.2111