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Pawlenty differs with Ryan over Medicare

By IBTimes Staff Reporter

Former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who officially announced his candidacy for president earlier this week, broke with House Republicans over Medicare, saying Wednesday that his plan to reform Medicare would allow seniors to choose between the current program or other options.

Speaking at the libertarian, Washington D.C.-based Cato Institute, Pawlenty was sure to praise House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan for his "leadership and courage," while saying that the plan he'll lay out is a different one than the one Ryan proposed.

Pawlenty's plan will include "a series of options that people can choose from, one of which would be to stay in the current program," he told reporters after his Cato speech.

He also said he would deliver details of a Medicare plan "shortly," but provided that his plan will change the way health care providers are paid, with an emphasis on quality of care, not quantity, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The Ryan plan, which passed the House with an affirmative vote from all but four Republicans, and no Democratic votes, would phase out Medicare as a fee-for-service system and replace it with a private insurance program backed by government subsidies. People 55 and older would not be affected by the plan. The changes would not go into effect until the year 2021.

The plan was a major source of contention in Tuesday's special election, which saw Democrat Kathy Hochu beating out Republican Jane Corwin in a solidly Republican 26th Congressional District. Corwin supported Ryan's plan, while Hochu attacked the plan as a concerted effort to destroy Medicare as Americans know it.