

Pawlenty to release Medicare plan

Posted by: Jeremy Herb under [2012 Presidential election](#), [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) Updated: May 25, 2011 - 4:02 PM

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With Medicare emerging as a major campaign issue in 2012 amid Tuesday's [Democratic upset](#) in an upstate New York House special election, former Gov. Tim Pawlenty toed the line Wednesday as he said he'd offer up his own Medicare plan.

Pawlenty, who gave a speech Wednesday in Washington at the libertarian Cato Institute, said that while Ryan's plan went in a positive direction, his will have clear differences.

"We'll be offering a variety of choices to people, where they can choose to stay in the current program or select from other options," Pawlenty said.

Pawlenty avoided getting too far into specifics, saying he'll focus on "payment reforms" and will release a full plan in the not-too-distant future. But his comments that people could remain in the current program contrast Ryan's idea to give those under 55 funds to purchase private insurance once they become Medicare eligible.

Pawlenty didn't directly answer whether he would sign the Ryan budget into law if he were president, something that Democrats have attacked him for this week.

The former Minnesota governor's Cato speech was in front of a relative friendly audience, as the libertarian think tank gave him one of four "A" grades last year in its governor rankings.

In questions from the audience, Pawlenty was asked if he would reduce America's military footprint abroad and why he opposed a medical marijuana bill in Minnesota.

Pawlenty answered the military question by saying that he would not shrink the military budget. On the marijuana question — which came from an audience member Pawlenty called on because he was wearing a "Vikings purple" tie — Pawlenty said he sided with law enforcement.

In addition to the Cato speech, Pawlenty attended a fundraiser in Washington Wednesday co-hosted by Minnesota Reps. John Kline and Erik Paulsen, though the congressmen's schedules prevented them from attending.