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# James Pethokoukis

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August 24th, 2009

## The strange Republican embrace of Medicare

Posted by: [James Pethokoukis](#)

Tags: [Uncategorized](#), [budget deficit](#), [healthcare reform](#), [Medicare](#)

[Chris Edwards](#) over at the Cato Institute is also unsettled by how the GOP is endorsing the status quo with Medicare spending to score political points:

Yet the taxpayer costs of Medicare are expected to more than double over the next decade (from \$425 billion in 2009 to \$871 billion in 2019), and the program will consume an increasing share of the nation's economy for decades to come unless there are serious cuts and reforms. Even the Obama administration talks about "bending the cost curve" to slow the program's growth.

Yet Republican National Committee chairman, [Michael Steele](#), takes to the *Washington Post* today to defend Medicare against any cuts, while at the same time criticizing the Democrats as "left-wing ideologues:" ... Steele uses the mushy statist phrasing "our seniors" repeatedly, as if the government owns this group of people, and that they should have no responsibility for their own lives.

Fiscal conservatives, who have come out in droves to tea party protests and health care meetings this year, are angry at both parties for the government's massive spending and debt binge in recent years. Mr. Steele has now informed these folks loud and clear that the Republican Party is not interested in restraining government; it is not interested in cutting the program that creates the single biggest threat to taxpayers in coming years. For apparently crass political reasons, Steele defends "our seniors," but at the expense of massive tax hikes on "our children" if entitlement programs are not cut.

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• James Pethokoukis is a Reuters columnist. Any views expressed are his own.

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@jimgeraghty that is like saying "watch this" before throwing a frisbee ... you know it will end up under a car or on a roof  
1 hour ago

@jimgeraghty right, counseling -- with extreme prejudice  
2 hours ago

@grossdm you are totally on target  
3 hours ago

@davidmwessel i am reading it right now, and really enjoying it.

• James Pethokoukis is the Money & Politics columnist and blogger for Reuters where he connects the nexus of Washington and Wall Street.

Previously he was the economics columnist and business editor at *U.S. News & World Report* magazine. Pethokoukis is also an official CNBC contributor and appears frequently on that network's *Kudlow Report*, *Power Lunch*, and *The Call* shows. In addition, he has appeared numerous times on MSNBC, Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network, CNN, and *Nightly Business Report* on PBS.

A 1989 graduate of Northwestern University where he double majored in Soviet politics and American history and a 1991 graduate of the Medill School of Journalism, Pethokoukis is a 2002 *Jeopardy!* champion. Pethokoukis can be reached at [james.pethokoukis@thomsonreuters.com](mailto:james.pethokoukis@thomsonreuters.com).

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