

The Heritage Foundation: The Foundry

[Morning Bell: Obamacare's Effect on Seniors](#)

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Today at 1:30 PM, President Barack Obama will participate in a [health care “tele-town hall”](#) at AARP headquarters in Washington, DC. The President is scheduled to answer questions about his health care plan from AARP members via phone, email, and even a live audience of about 40 AARP members and volunteers. We hope the event’s moderators will allow for a lively and honest debate, because our nation’s seniors stand to be huge losers under Obamacare:

Losing Your Doctor: Under the current system, more and more seniors are discovering that it is becoming harder and harder to find and keep doctors who will accept Medicare patients. A [2008 survey](#) found that 29% of the Medicare beneficiaries it surveyed who were looking for a primary care doctor had a problem finding one to treat them, up from 24% the year before. This problem is compounded by the fact that [our nation is facing a growing shortage of doctors](#). Obamacare promises to only make these problems worse. First, [Obama plans to pay for up to a third of his plan by cutting \\$313 billion in Medicare reimbursements to health care providers over the next 10 years](#). This will only force more doctors to stop seeing Medicare patients. Second, [Obama’s public “option” could decrease the annual net income of hospitals by \\$36 billion, while the annual net income of physicians could drop by \\$33.1 billion](#). Facing a sharp reduction in their pay, more doctors will retire early and more bright students will elect to pursue other careers, thereby reducing access and ensuring lower quality health care for future generations as well.

Losing Your Coverage: 22% of all Medicare patients, which translates to 10.5 million seniors, are currently enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans. These health plans [cover all of the traditional Medicare benefits and much more](#), including coordinated care and care-management programs for enrollees with chronic conditions as well as additional hospitalization and skilled nursing facility stays. [President Obama has proposed killing this program entirely](#). A [new study](#) for the Florida Association of Health Plans found that, because Medicare Advantage plans have richer benefits and lower deductibles and co-payments than traditional Medicare, seniors in that state would face dramatically higher payments if forced to give up their Medicare Advantage plans. Cost increases would range from \$2,214 a year in Jacksonville to \$3,714 a year in Miami.

Rationing Your Care: Another centerpiece to Obamacare is the creation of a [federal health board](#) that will ration your health care. Obama supporter and infanticide advocate Peter Singer made the case for rationing health care recently in the [New York Times](#), writing: “The task of health care bureaucrats is then to get the best value for the resources they have been allocated.” Conservatives in Congress have given Obamacare supporters every opportunity to disavow government-rationed health care, but [Obamacare supporters](#)

[have voted down every anti-rationing amendment proposed.](#) Make no mistake, Obama plans to pay for expanded coverage for the young and healthy by denying treatments to the old and sick. [Americans can do better.](#)

There is no question that America's \$2.4 trillion health care system needs to be reformed. But it should not be done on the backs of America's seniors. Conservatives have [a better vision for health care reform](#) that cuts health care costs by reforming the tax system, enabling true health care competition, and giving families control of their health care dollars.

Quick Hits:

- Under oath to the Senate Ethics Committee, former Countrywide Financial loan officer Robert Feinberg, testified that Sens. Christopher J. Dodd (D-CT) and Kent Conrad (D-ND) both knew their Countrywide loans came from a special program to give [below-market-rate mortgages to the powerful and famous.](#)
- Seven men, including a father [who trained in jihad camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan,](#) were arrested in North Carolina on terrorism charges.
- According to [Gallup,](#) only 27% of Americans believe members of Congress “have a good understanding” about health care issues.
- Court and regulatory rulings [protecting endangered fish](#) are causing California farmers to lay off thousands of workers.
- Despite the [catastrophic threat from Electro-Magnetic Pulse \(EMP\) attack,](#) the Department of Homeland Security doesn't have an EMP disaster-planning scenario and the Obama administration has cut missile defense.

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