

OPPOSING VIEWS

Republicans Hope Trump Will Shift On Social Security

Jordan Smith

March 2, 2017

Several congressional Republicans hope President Donald Trump will abandon his current stance in opposition to cuts to Social Security or Medicare.

In a budget outline, Trump emphasized that there would be "no change" to Social Security, Fox Business reported.

At current funding levels, Social Security will not be able to fund benefits by 2034. The Medicare system is estimated to go bankrupt in 2028.

"At some point we're going to have to get serious about addressing entitlements, that's the biggest part of the budget," Republican Representative James Comer told the Huffington Post. "We can't continue to kick the can down the road on entitlements."

However, he acknowledged that Trump had a strong standing on the issue due to his election campaign promise not to cut entitlements. Comer added, "he won my district by over 50 points."

Republican Representative Justin Amash echoed Comer's views.

"It's a concern that I haven't heard a plan yet from the administration to deal with our overall spending and debt problem," Amash said.

Some Republicans mentioned Mick Mulvaney, Trump's budget director. As a member of the House, Mulvaney pushed for budget cuts to Social Security and Medicare.

But support for entitlement reform is not shared by all Republicans.

"I'm glad that entitlements are not going to be touched," said Representative Ralph Abraham. "These are people that have paid into the program all their life. This is basically their money at this age."

House Speaker Paul Ryan has long advocated cuts to Social Security and Medicare. In November, he told Fox, "Obamacare rewrote Medicare, rewrote Medicaid, so if you're going to repeal and replace Obamacare, you have to address those issues as well."

Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, suggested it could be possible to maintain benefits for current recipients, but added that entitlements for younger workers would have to be cut.

"It is utterly irresponsible to continue ducking the need for entitlement reform," Tanner added. "Medicare and Social Security alone constitute 38 percent of federal spending, and that percentage will only grow larger in the future. The unfunded liabilities of those two programs exceed \$80 trillion "

Trump's Treasury Secretary, Steven Mnuchin, insisted that no change of course is immanent.

"We are not touching [Social Security and Medicare] now. So don't expect to see that as part of this budget," Mnuchin told Fox.