

[Pawlenty: Sure, I'd End Medicare](#)

By: [David Dayen](#) Thursday May 26, 2011
11:41 am



Yesterday, Tim Pawlenty, one of the two likely nominees for President on the Republican side, gave a speech in Washington where he [appeared to break with Republicans](#), however gently, on the subject of Medicare. He said he would offer his own plan shortly, and emphasized health care delivery and payment to providers, a hallmark of President Obama's approach and in contrast to the Ryan phase-out. He also appeared to suggest that seniors should be able to have more choice between a public and private system, rather than simply get a coupon for private insurance. His plan would have "a series of options that people can choose from, one of which would be to stay in the current program."

But reporters continued to question him, and he basically [gave up](#) today.

If that was the only bill that came by my desk and I wasn't able to pass my own bill, I would sign it. TPaw on Ryan plan.

Like it or not, the Ryan budget has become a litmus test for Republicans. Just look at what happened to Newt Gingrich when he strayed from the orthodoxy. They think it's just a [messaging problem](#), and that you can talk the public into ending the single-payer health insurance plan they love. So we'll have this yo-yo string all primary long, where candidates say they have a different plan other than the Ryan budget, and are then forced into supporting it. In the meantime, "Republicans in disarray" stories will predominate, and internal dissent and deliberations displayed. This was such a monumental unforced error from the House GOP.

And I don't think ["resetting the debate"](#) by promising lower taxes for the rich and corporations is really going to work either. In fact, their whole "reset" plan is basically everything they've been pushing for all year: cutting regulations, cutting budgets, cutting taxes.

Meanwhile, Pawlenty revealed himself as a deficit fraud in yesterday's speech at the Cato Institute, by vowing to cut wherever and whenever to reduce the deficit – [except for the military](#), one of the two massive pieces of the budget that exist (the joke about how America is an HMO with a standing army applies). Saying this at the anti-imperial, libertarian Cato Institute is an example of the tone-deafness of the Republican field.

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