

WAR ON SENIORS: How Republican Cuts Hurt Older Adults

Trump, Elon Musk, and Congressional Republicans are intent on slashing essential programs for older Americans. These drastic cuts will worsen poverty, food insecurity, and health; shift unsustainable cost burdens to states; and undermine the health and economic well-being of seniors.

Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security are the bedrock of economic and health security for American seniors. While these earned benefits provide stability, many older adults still struggle to make ends meet. In 2022, [about 6 to 8 million](#) seniors (ages 65+) lived in poverty and [3 in 10 lived on limited annual incomes](#) of roughly \$28,000. Other essential programs, like SNAP, help low-income seniors stretch their limited budgets as grocery, housing, and other costs increase.

Congress Should Protect—Not Hurt—Seniors

Republican cuts are not just numbers—they represent real harm to older Americans' health, nutrition, and economic security. The loss of essential federal funding would be catastrophic – state budgets will never recover.

Older adults count on Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, Social Security and more to stay healthy and be financially stable; these programs are under direct assault, threatening seniors' access to the benefits they paid for. **Congress must reject devastating cuts and prioritize seniors' well-being.**

Health Care Cuts: Making Seniors Sicker & Hiking Prescription Drug Costs

- Medicaid provides critical coverage for more than 7 million seniors. Medicaid pays for services for [2 in 3](#) nursing home residents—or nearly 800,000 individuals. Close to [2 million seniors](#) who need long-term care rely on Medicaid for home-based services. Every proposal on the Republican [wish list](#) of more than \$2 trillion in Medicaid cuts is [bad news for seniors](#).
- Catastrophic cuts of any hundreds of billions would [shift costs to states](#), leading to coverage loss, benefits cuts, and lower payment rates for hospitals, nursing homes, and other essential health care providers—putting seniors at risk of losing coverage and access to care. Such cuts could force state and local governments to cut costs elsewhere, [like K-12 education](#).
- Republicans will take nurses out of nursing homes by undoing common sense minimum staffing standards, putting seniors who need care 24/7 at increased risk of abuse and neglect. Republican cuts also threaten access to the home-based care most families prefer, and these services already have lengthy wait lists.
- Republicans also plan to repeal Medicaid rules that would cause nearly 1 million low-income seniors to lose their supplemental Medicaid coverage, increasing their Medicare premiums and out-of-pocket costs. For these enrollees, a cut to Medicaid is a cut to Medicare.

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- About [7.5 million Americans](#) over age 50 purchase health insurance on their own in the Marketplace through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). [More than 90%](#) of those enrolled in this coverage rely on tax credits to afford coverage. Starting next year, these tax credits will be taken away, causing premiums to skyrocket, and leading to coverage losses—unless Republicans act. Small business owners, food and construction services workers, family caregivers, and others nearing retirement could lose their health insurance.
- Republicans' [wish list](#) includes unnamed policies to spend up to \$20 billion to undercut progress made in the Inflation Reduction Act to lower prescription drug prices. As [Trump wines and dines Big Pharma](#), Congressional Republicans are entertaining policies that would let Medicare negotiate prices for [fewer](#) drugs and keep sky-high priced drugs on the market for [longer](#).
- Democrats fought Big Pharma and won, lowering health care costs for taxpayers and seniors. Had the new prices been in effect in 2023, Medicare would have [saved an estimated \\$6 billion](#) on the first 10 prescription drugs selected for negotiation. Democrats delivered even more savings, including a \$35 cap on insulin copayments and an annual \$2,000 out-of-pocket cap on prescription drug costs. Republicans are preparing to do Big Pharma's bidding and hike seniors' prescription drug costs.

IMPACT ON SENIORS:

- **More seniors paying more for health care, prescription drugs, and getting sicker.**
- Higher mortality and preventable illnesses when seniors go without routine care.
- Reductions in the home and community-based services that help seniors live at home.
- Unsafe and poorer quality care in nursing homes that are already understaffed.
- Delayed diagnoses for chronic conditions, worsening long-term health outcomes.

Social Security Cuts: Customer Service Cuts are Benefit Cuts

- The Social Security Administration (SSA), under the direction of Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), announced plans to [cut at least 7,000 employees](#), and make it more difficult for people to apply for benefits or change their bank information over the phone, forcing over 4 million people to seek help in person. At the same time, DOGE and SSA shuttered 60 percent of regional offices, close field offices around the country, leaving seniors with nowhere to turn. This assault on the SSA lays the groundwork for Republicans' privatization of the Social Security program.
- [Planned cuts](#) to SSA phone services will not only make it harder for older adults to access services but will make it nearly impossible for those who do not live near a field office, who have no reliable broadband, or who lack a smartphone, computer or the skills to apply for benefits online.

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- SSA is the doorway to Medicare, where new retirees are directed to enroll in Medicare and to seek help to afford premiums and out-of-pockets for prescription drug coverage. Cuts to SSA staff and services will make it harder for seniors to access their earned Medicare benefits.
- With the recent exodus of thousands of experienced agency employees, coupled with DOGE receiving unfettered access to Americans' most sensitive information could lead to a disruption of payments and expose seniors to being defrauded.

IMPACT ON SENIORS:

- **Retirees go without their earned Social Security and Medicare benefits.**
- Surviving family members and people with disabilities will struggle to access benefits.
- Seniors face increased red tape and less efficient service, particularly in rural areas.
- Places retirees at increased risk of being defrauded.

SNAP Cuts: Increasing Senior Hunger

- SNAP helps 42 million Americans to put food on their tables each month. [Thirty one percent of households](#) participating in SNAP include an older family member. More than [1 in 11 seniors](#) is food insecure—cuts to SNAP will only deepen food insecurity among older adults.
- Republicans' House-passed budget resolution requires \$230 billion in cuts to food assistance. Cuts of this magnitude—or anything close to it—would be devastating to American families in every state.
- SNAP benefits currently average only \$6.20 per person per day. At a time when seniors living on fixed incomes are struggling with the high cost of groceries, a cut of this size would result in an [immediate increase in food costs](#), dropping the projected daily SNAP benefit in 2026 by \$1.40 per day, or over \$500 per year per person.
- A new unfunded mandate requiring states to pay for tens or even hundreds of billions of SNAP costs would force states to cut benefits, severely restrict program eligibility, or both. Community providers such as food banks, schools, and Area Agencies on Aging will be left to try to fill a role abandoned by the federal government.
- Other proposals to roll back Thrifty Food Plan updates (the basis for SNAP benefits), limit state flexibility on income and asset limits that 45 states have used, or expand SNAP's harsh, existing work requirement to older adults would take food away from seniors.

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- Seniors who are food insecure [consume less energy and have lower intake of key nutrients](#). [SNAP participation](#) is linked to fewer nursing home and hospital admissions for seniors, and SNAP ensures low-income seniors are not forced to forgo their medication in order to afford groceries. Because food insecurity is [linked to more frequent hospitalizations and more visits to the doctor and emergency rooms](#), SNAP cuts are likely to result in higher health care costs for taxpayers and seniors.

IMPACT ON SENIORS:

- **More seniors going hungry;** [SNAP reduces food insecurity by 30%](#).
- More visits to hospitals, ERs, and higher health care costs for seniors.

SSBG & TANF Cuts: Taking Away Meals and Help for Grandfamilies

- The Republican [wish list](#) of cuts **altogether eliminates SSBG funding**—gutting programs that invest in seniors, including adult day care and other services. Cuts to Meals on Wheels or adult day care services will mean that more seniors are hospitalized or wind up in nursing homes, costing the federal government more money.
- Last year, Meals on Wheels provided nutritious meals and social connection to seniors in [37 states](#), relying, in part, on Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds. For some providers, SSBG funds are the only federal support they receive.
- SSBG also supports adult protective services workers. As an example, in South Carolina, SSBG is the sole source of federal funding for the state's adult protective services program. Elimination of SSBG increases the likelihood that elder abuse and neglect will go unnoticed nationwide.
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is one of the only sources of federal [support available to grandfamilies](#)—grandparents who are often unexpectedly raising their grandchildren. Cuts to TANF means grandfamilies have less access to child care and cash assistance to keep kids fed, healthy, and safe. Republican cuts would restrict eligibility, impose paperwork hurdles, and decrease funding for job training and child care, including Head Start.

IMPACT ON SENIORS:

- **More unnoticed elder abuse and neglect.**
- **More seniors going hungry and struggling to make ends meet.**
- Without home-delivered meals and adult day services, hospitalizations will increase.
- Without community-based supports, more seniors will be forced into nursing homes.
- Grandfamilies will be impoverished by the unexpected costs of raising their grandchildren.

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Elon Musk's Cuts: Halting Help and Research for Seniors

- Compounding service disruptions at the Social Security Administration, Trump and Musk will dismantle the Administration for Community Living (ACL)—the only federal agency singularly devoted to the well-being of seniors and people with disabilities.
- This will suffocate direct oversight and support for community-based services for seniors and people with disabilities, disrupting the services and supports that help keep 11 million seniors healthy at home and in their communities, including the delivery of over 220 million meals.
- Trump and Musk will fire roughly 300 employees at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and shutter regional offices; most of the fired staff offer direct casework to seniors who need help navigating benefits and managing conflicts about access to care or appeals with insurers.
- Trump's and Musk's reckless cuts and firings will also result in diminished investments in research on cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and other chronic conditions that impact seniors, fewer mental health services, including for seniors at increased risk for suicide.

IMPACT ON SENIORS:

- **Seniors going without taxpayer-funded services they paid for.**
- Needless roadblocks for older adults applying for assistance and essential services.
- Poorer quality care in nursing homes and fewer caseworkers to help people with Medicare.
- Slowed innovation, including less research to find the cure for Alzheimer's disease.