



Talking points for TV / Radio News

Overview: The theme for the 50th Anniversary Celebration is --> *Medicare is as American as Apple Pie.*

Medicare symbolizes what we value: compassionate quality health care delivered in a cost effective manner. Across the US we are joining together to celebrate Medicare's successful 50-year track record and call for more PIE! That stands for **Protect, Improve and Expand Medicare**. Healthcare is a human right. To uphold that right, we want a single standard of quality care for all, not just for those who can afford it. That's why we want Medicare for all!

Please see the **Medicare Turns 50 Fact Sheet** for useful facts about Medicare that you can combine with the talking points below.

Remember: Talking points are to provide guidance - avoid reading from the sheet of paper. If your local action is highlighting a **local** angle as to why we need Medicare for all - bring that in early on by saying, "An example of why we need to improve and expand Medicare is happening right here in _____." Then describe simply how the current issue is restricting access to timely care. Then move back to the big picture: that's why we need Medicare for all.

Introduce yourself and why you care about this issue:

For example: My name is _____ and I am a registered nurse at _____ hospital in _____. I am here today because I see every day how people suffer when they can't afford access to healthcare.

General talking points: (written for nurses, but anyone can adapt- speak from the heart!)

- >> We're here today to celebrate Medicare's 50th Birthday and it's terrific track record as a public program that delivers quality healthcare to 55 million Americans, including seniors and disabled.
- >> As nurses we believe it is absolutely vital that we protect, improve and expand Medicare.
- >> Medicare was originally conceived as a first step toward covering everyone in U.S. society under a national health insurance program. It's about time we finish the job.
- >> Medicare is under attack by people like US Rep. Paul Ryan. His proposals would dismantle Medicare. We oppose all efforts to cut Medicare, to turn it in to a voucher program or privatize it or to reduce its reach by increasing the age of eligibility.
- >> It is time for the U.S. catch up with the many other nations that have a national health insurance program. We have the most expensive healthcare in the world and we get the least bang for our buck. The U.S ranks 27th out of 36 OECD countries, which includes European and other developed countries, in life expectancy, and number 1 in obesity. That is unacceptable! We can do better.
- >> The solution is expanding Medicare. Medicare has a 50-year track record and when compared with private insurance it is superior in every way. It provides better care and is much more cost effective.
- >> Medicare spends only 1.6 % on administrative overhead compared to 18 % for private insurance companies. As much as one-fourth to one-third of private health insurance expenditures are for advertising, executive compensation, real estate and Wall Street investments.

>> When we invest in Medicare nearly 98% of that investment goes to patient care. The private insurers on the other hand, syphon off at least 185 billion dollars a year on CEO salaries, advertising and into their profits.

Why We Need to Expand Medicare

>> Our current system still leaves far too many people under or uninsured. Despite passage of the Affordable Care Act, **30 million** people will remain uninsured between 2016 and 2024.

>> As nurses we see the results of that everyday - People with acute medical problems that could be stabilized or resolved with adequate preventive care, don't get that care because they aren't insured or they can't afford the out of pocket expenses - high deductibles and co-pays. Many people can't afford to take the medications that they need because of the high cost.

>> Sixty-two percent of all personal bankruptcies in the U.S. are linked to medical bills or illness and three-quarters of those bankrupted **had** health insurance when they got sick.

>> Private insurance companies have clearly failed us. That's why the ACA is inadequate, because it retains the root of the problem, private insurance companies - it is based on our fragmented financing system, making it impossible to control costs. Private insurers will continue to strip down policies, maintain restrictive networks, limit and deny care, and increase costs.

>> Another huge problem is that twenty-one states have refused to expand Medicaid coverage since passage of the Affordable Care Act, denying 4.3 million people health coverage that are eligible under the ACA.

>> It is not right that people have to make choices every day between receiving the care they need and the other basic necessities of life due to high costs and restricted access to care. That's why we need Medicare for all.

Do's and Don'ts to Protect, Improve and Expand Medicare:

Don't privatize Medicare by using vouchers, aka "premium support payments" -- this would result in reduced care because the value of vouchers would trail rises in costs - vouchers would not cover the care patients need.

Don't increase the eligibility age – this would hurt millions and drive up costs, increase emergency room visits, etc. Rep. Paul Ryan wants to increase the eligibility age and this would leave many 65-67 year olds without adequate insurance.

Don't increase cost-sharing, i.e. higher premiums, deductibles, co-pays -- out-of-pocket expenses are already too high, deterring patients from seeking care.

Do allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices.

Do stop paying private Medicare plans more than traditional Medicare – i.e. end the Medicare Advantage plans which only benefit the bottom lines of the private insurance industry.

Do include a drug benefit, bulk purchasing of prescription drugs, and regulated drug prices in traditional Medicare (vs. the private Medicare Part D plans).

Do eliminate high deductibles and co-pays.

Do cover everyone and save money by establishing a publicly financed, mainly privately delivered improved Medicare for all, i.e. a single-payer system.

Do pass the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act, H.R. 676, which would put such a single-payer system in place.