



Seniors Make America Great

Responding to the concerns of America's senior population with honor and dignity

As President, one of my highest priorities will be standing up for America's seniors. The United States is a global leader because older Americans made it so - through their blood, sweat, and tears; through their commitment to service; through the example they have set for generations of Americans and people throughout the world. We owe seniors our most sincere devotion - and we all have a duty to respect their rights and ensure their dignity.

My seniors agenda is built on six pillars:

1. Protect Social Security and Medicare.

As President, my commitment to Social Security and Medicare will never waver. We Americans need to once again invest in a circle of care and commitment that follows us throughout the course of our lives. Working-age Americans continue to provide for our seniors because those seniors provided for them in years past, and because those seniors cared for the generation before them. In turn, Americans of all ages hope that younger generations will provide for them when they are one day in need. The Social Security and Medicare programs bind the generations together in mutual responsibility. They are the keystones of the circle of care and commitment that defines our greatest strength and potential. No national priority is more important because no other commitment is more central to the values that make America great.

Today, some forty-seven million Americans are receiving Social Security benefits. Tomorrow, this number will be much higher. As things stand today, two-thirds of Americans receiving these benefits depend on Social Security for more than half of their income. That's why I will never raise the retirement age or privatize Social Security. Social Security is too vital a source of income to leave its survival to the caprice of the market.

Medicare is the primary source of health insurance for over 40 million elderly and people with disabilities. We need to ensure that Medicare is sound for the current generation of seniors, as well as the baby boomers who will begin to retire at the end of the decade. My plan would adopt proven policies to reduce excessive Medicare costs and modernize Medicare. As we make certain that we are deriving the best possible value from Medicare, we also need to address provider reimbursement shortcomings that might undermine quality or access, particularly in rural parts of our nation. As President, I will take all of the necessary steps to preserve and strengthen Medicare, and I will do so without forcing Medicare beneficiaries into HMOs or restricting a patient's choice of doctors.

2. Add a real prescription drug benefit to Medicare.

The so-called Medicare Reform Act violates the most basic tenet of the Hippocratic Oath: first, do no harm. As a result of this gift from President Bush to the pharmaceutical industry, millions of senior citizens and people with disabilities will lose the prescription drug benefit they are currently getting through retiree health plans. Millions more will see

their Medicare premiums increase. Worst of all, this legislation fails to meaningfully constrain the spiraling cost of prescription drugs.

Too many older Americans are faced with an untenable choice between essential medications and other necessities of life. Medicare cannot be a modern health care program without providing meaningful and fair prescription drug coverage. As president, I will provide America's seniors with the comprehensive, meaningful, and affordable prescription drug benefit they deserve. I will also work to legalize the importation of less expensive drugs from Canada, with the appropriate safeguards, and to allow Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies for bulk discounts.

Please click [here](#) to see the full details of my plan to deliver coverage for prescription drugs.

3. Improve long-term care.

As baby boomers approach retirement and seniors enjoy longer lives, it's more important than ever to improve and expand our system for long-term care. Seniors and their families need better options for helping loved ones in need of daily assistance with basic tasks. We must give working families real alternatives to our traditional institutions, and ensure that seniors can be cared for within their homes and communities. Second, we need to make certain that these home-based services provide quality care by improving training, increasing inspections, and better rewarding providers that consistently give high quality care. Finally, we must protect the continued viability of Medicaid, which currently pays the largest share of long-term care costs.

4. Increase opportunities for service.

Seniors have a special contribution to make to the well-being of the nation. We must work to support and strengthen the great many forms of service that seniors are today providing to other seniors and all Americans nationwide.

I believe that we ought to offer seniors more opportunities to volunteer in the public school system, serve as foster grandparents, and other programs that provide our youth with mentors. The experience, wisdom, and love that our seniors have to offer are national resources that we must both cherish and utilize.

5. Support medical research.

The active pursuit of innovation in medical research is of great value not only to those Americans in need of care but to their friends, families, our nation and the world as a whole. Both the needs and possibilities for new approaches in medical science and its implementation have never been greater in the everyday lives of those over 50 in America and around the world. Whether in treating diseases like Alzheimer's, cancer, arthritis, diabetes or emphysema, or in finding ways to prevent them, medical science is full of potentially significant breakthroughs and methods of delivery that need to be sought out and encouraged. Such scientific work includes the careful and ethical practices of stem cell research and other forms of human tissue regeneration.

As President, I would support giving new, empirically sound treatments and care strategies a chance by incorporating them into older and more established systems of care, treatment and their sound management. I would remain determined to make medical research work to increase efficiency in the medical community while protecting and expanding the well-being of those who stand to benefit the most from its results and applications.

6. Combat age discrimination.

Among the most important rights that deeply affect the growing number of Americans over 50 are those that are meant to empower them against all forms of discrimination based upon age. As a growing number of Americans over 50 change careers and continue to be employed after retirement age, new measures must be put in place and older measures enforced to ensure the abilities of those over 50 to continue to work and provide for themselves and their families.

In addition, I am concerned with the growing trend in different sectors of the economy to alter, and in some cases remove, benefits to and rights of persons over 50 simply based upon their age. As President, I would meet such unethical and legally questionable practices with the most serious scrutiny and planning in order to secure the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness that our Constitution guarantees all Americans.