

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY

...don't cut it.

February 7, 2017

Dear Senator:

The Strengthen Social Security Coalition is a broad-based alliance of over 350 national and statewide organizations, including women's, labor, aging, disability, veterans, civil rights and other groups representing over 50 million Americans. The Coalition strongly urges you to vote against confirming Representative Tom Price to be Secretary of Health and Human Services. For the following reasons, we view a vote to confirm Mr. Price as a vote against Medicare.

Representative Price has made clear his strong desire to end Medicare. Against all evidence, Representative Price falsely claims that "nothing has had a greater negative effect on the delivery of health care than the federal government's intrusion into medicine through Medicare." In furtherance of his anti-Medicare aims, he has said "we will not rest until we make certain that government-run health care [e.g., Medicare] is ended."

If confirmed by the Senate, Representative Price will be in a powerful position to carry out his threat to end Medicare. There are two ways to destroy Medicare. One is legislatively. The other is administratively. If Representative Price is confirmed to be the Secretary of Health and Human Services, he will be in a powerful position to destroy Medicare in both ways, and along with it, Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, and so many other programs vital to the health and well-being of all of us.

Right after the election, Speaker Paul Ryan falsely announced that repealing the Affordable Care Act requires changing Medicare, when, of course, it does not. The Medicare provisions in the ACA could merely be left unchanged. Under that false pretext, though, Speaker Ryan has proposed replacing Medicare's guarantee with vouchers to offset some of the cost of premiums that seniors and people with disabilities will be charged if and when they are able to purchase private health insurance. The foreseeable impact of such a change would be to burden seniors and people with disabilities with exorbitant premiums, co-pays, and deductibles for health insurance, if, that is, seniors and people with disabilities were able to obtain health insurance at any price.

Mr. Price, who supports the Ryan proposal, [said](#) that the Republicans intend to enact Ryan's Medicare voucher plan in the first six to eight months of the Trump administration. As Secretary of Health and Human Services, Mr. Price would be in an even more powerful

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position to help achieve that goal. Rather than one of 435 members of the House of Representatives, he would be the Trump administration's chief Medicare spokesman.

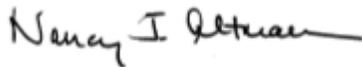
And, as the top Medicare person, he would be in a position to do more destruction even than championing legislation that ends Medicare. As Secretary, Mr. Price would be able to revoke regulations that protect beneficiaries, and issue regulations that harm them. Moreover, policymakers, researchers and others rely on the Department of Health and Human Services for accurate, reliable data. In this world of alternative "facts," could anyone trust the data put forward by the very Department Secretary who is determined to end Medicare?

Some might say that we should simply oppose destructive acts Mr. Price takes once confirmed. Given Medicare's importance, we believe a wait and see attitude is too perilous. Given Mr. Price's views about Medicare, voting to put him in control of it is a vote to destroy it.

No one voted to destroy Medicare. Medicare has stood the test of time. Medicare shows government at its best. Because it works so well, Medicare is overwhelmingly popular with the American people. We urge you to stand with the American people and reject Mr. Price and the threat that he poses to Medicare and its hundreds of millions of contributors and beneficiaries.

To repeat, our Coalition views a vote for Mr. Price as a vote to end Medicare. We will work to make sure that the American people know who voted to confirm Mr. Price and who voted against, who voted, through the Price vote, against Medicare and who voted to protect Medicare.

Sincerely,



Nancy J. Altman

Co-Chair, Strengthen Social Security Coalition