



As co-chair of the [Congressional Task Force on Seniors](#) in the House of Representatives, I am committed to improving the health and well-being of aging Americans. I have consistently supported policies that are important to seniors in Sacramento, such as protecting Social Security, strengthening Medicare, and reforming our financial system so that all Americans have the tool they need to achieve retirement security. These are critical components of the Democratic agenda to ensure that older Americans have the stability and security that they have earned and deserve.

Seniors Bill of Rights

Our elderly Americans have spent many years working to raise families and improve the communities in which they live, and we must ensure they are treated fairly and with dignity as they age. To ensure that our seniors are respected by the Federal Government, I have authored the [Seniors Bill of Rights](#). The Seniors Bill of Rights



outlines the basic tenets I believe our senior citizens deserve, including:

1. *The right to a financially secure retirement.*
2. *The right to quality, affordable health care.*
3. *The right to protection from scams and fraud.*
4. *The right to a safe and livable community.*

To protect our seniors from abuse, I will only support legislation that protects these rights.

Social Security

Social Security, a federal program established as part of the New Deal in the 1935, provides monthly monetary assistance to retirees, their survivors, and the disabled. Social Security is a pillar of our society, representing our nation's promise to preserving the well-being and dignity of its people as they grow older. [For 75 years](#), Social Security has provided older Americans with stability and security by offering a minimum level of guaranteed income to aging citizens.

During this time of great economic hardship, nothing could be more important than ensuring our seniors have the resources necessary for maintaining a healthy and active life style. That is why I have worked diligently to ensure the federal government continues to provide the retirement benefits our seniors have earned.

In 2010, the Social Security Administration allocated \$708 billion in benefits to over 51 million Americans. Currently, payroll taxes generate enough revenue to cover the current beneficiaries. However, as the baby boom generation approaches retirement, concerns about the system's financial viability have dominated our political discourse.

Since 1975, Social Security benefits have increased yearly due to a formula based COLA, which takes into account changes in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). According to the Social Security Administration (SSA), an increase in the CPI-W from the third quarter of the last year to the third quarter of the current year will result in an automatic Social Security benefits raise. If there is no percentage increase in the CPI-W between the two periods, no COLA is payable. Unfortunately, the drop in consumer prices over the past year canceled the automatic COLA in 2011.

With this prospect in mind, I am a cosponsor of [H.R. 776, the Guaranteed 3% COLA for Seniors Act of 2011](#). H.R. 776 would ensure seniors receive a 3% increase in benefits.

Congresswoman Matsui speaks on the House floor about the importance of preserving and strengthening Social Security **Medicare**

[For 45 years](#), Medicare has provided Seniors with access to affordable health care. Over 39 million retired Americans rely on Medicare to provide some or all of their health insurance needs. Despite access to such benefits, elderly Americans spend almost a quarter of their

yearly income on health care services. That is why I have worked to strengthen our Medicare program, and ensure it continues to provide retired Americans access to affordable and reliable health care insurance.

To help alleviate the financial impact of medical coverage, I have supported a number of bills that will reduce costs to Medicare recipients, while increasing benefit in the program. For example, the Affordable Care Act, also known as the new health reform law, takes concrete steps to strengthening Medicare for all who receive it, without cutting any benefits to patients. Before passage of the law, Medicare provided some assistance with drug costs, but the program included a coverage gap where no help with paying for a beneficiary's prescription drugs was provided. Commonly referred to as the "donut hole," nearly 10 percent of Medicare beneficiaries will reach this coverage gap, a problem which was created by prescription drug reforms put in place by the previous Administration. Since the implementation of those policies, the donut hole has left thousands of seniors to choose between buying the prescriptions they need and putting food on the table. But as a result of the new health insurance reform law, help is already on the way. In 2010, approximately 4 million seniors across the country received a [donut hole check of \\$250](#)

to help them cover their prescription drug costs. Beginning January 1, 2011, seniors in the donut hole received a 50 percent discount on brand name drugs, and by 2020, the donut hole will be completely closed, giving Medicare beneficiaries greater economic stability and security, without compromising their health.

Another important benefit for Medicare beneficiaries from the health reform law is increased access to and focus on preventative care. Before the new law, Medicare beneficiaries only received one wellness physical throughout their entire time on the program. Starting next year, all Medicare beneficiaries will be able to see their doctor once a year for an annual physical. This will allow Medicare beneficiaries the chance to focus on wellness and prevention, while providing the time for doctors to identify risk factors or developing ailments early. Furthermore, Medicare beneficiaries will have access to a host of new preventative screenings and procedures, without any out-of-pocket costs. This benefit will allow doctors to catch developing diseases early, when they often can be treated more effectively and with minimal disruption to the patient.

Finally, the law strengthens the system of Medicare as a whole. It provides for increasing the primary care workforce, which will increase Medicare beneficiaries' access to care, and strengthens the financial footing of the program. This is a critical step, as it will extend Medicare solvency by an additional 12 years, from 2017 to 2029.

Congresswoman Matsui speaks on the importance of protecting Medicare