



Bird-dogging on Medicaid

Challenging MOC's who voted for the Ryan budget

Definition: Bird-dogging is a practice of "hounding" candidates and elected officials on key public issues. Activists engage in the practice when candidates or elected officials either refuse to address an issue of importance to their constituency and/or have taken a position that hurts their constituency.

Our Strategy: Confront Members who support cutting Medicaid/Medicare and the Ryan Budget in order to influence the narrative and in order to influence Democrats who may consider supporting cuts. The goal is create a drumbeat by showing that the public is still angry with politicians that support cutting services for seniors and families in Medicaid.

Tips on Bird-dogging:

- Ask questions that make a point. What will listeners learn from your question regardless of how it is answered? Be prepared with a good follow-up.
- Don't take no for an answer! Don't be afraid to say – Congressman, that doesn't answer my question. Then repeat it.
- Talk through how you will need to adjust your approach based on the forum e.g. talk show, coffee shop, press conference, street.
- Go as a team – so that you have more opportunities to get heard and ask follow-up questions.
- Role play in advance of the encounter! It is very important to be comfortable asking your question and to be able to ask them clearly!
- Video the interaction to provide a record of the event for the public, your members and the press.
- After the event – discuss how it went, what you learned, and what you might do better next time. How were you most successful (or not) at asking questions. Did their response change? How did you capture their response – media, your own

Ryan Budget & Medicaid: Converts Medicaid into state block grants that will shift costs to states, lower payments to hospitals and doctors, cost 3 million jobs, and impoverish seniors and their families by shifting to them the burden of paying for nursing homes and other expensive long-term care services.

Message tips on Ryan Budget & Medicaid: Keep messages simple and stay away from terms like "block grant" or "voucher" that regular people won't know. Always contrast cuts with the fact that the Ryan Budget protects corporate tax subsidies and loopholes (esp. for big oil), increases tax breaks for millionaires, and shifts more burden to the middle class. *Most compelling message on Medicaid:* Increases the cost of nursing home care for millions of families and reduces the quality of home care while also slashing support to help people with disabilities live independently. Shreds the social safety net during the hardest economic times that many families have seen in years.

Three short questions to shout out:

- ✓ ***Why are you kicking people out of nursing homes by slashing Medicaid while defending tax breaks to Big Oil?***
- ✓ ***Why are you slashing Medicaid for seniors, women and children– instead of having millionaires and corporations contribute?***
- ✓ ***Would you support raising taxes on the rich, closing corporate tax loopholes and ending subsidies for big oil to balance the budget instead of cuts to Medicaid?***

When you've got 1 minute:

Near retirement - I have worked hard all my life and am looking forward to retirement – but your vote has me very worried about my retirement security. How can you defend your vote to privatize Medicare and to gut Medicaid – which covers 80% of seniors in nursing homes – at the same time that you continue to give tax breaks to big oil companies? How can you say that you're for working people with a budget like that?

Seniors - Can you tell seniors in your district why you voted to slash funding for seniors while protecting tax breaks for millionaires? The cuts to Medicare are going to double out-of-pocket-costs for those on Medicare. The cuts you want in Medicaid – which cover 3 out of 4 people in nursing home -- are going to force seniors out of nursing homes. Why are you balancing the deficit on senior's backs – instead of having millionaires and corporations contribute?

Family member in a nursing home with Medicaid- My mother is a nursing home and like the most of people getting long-term care she is covered by Medicaid. You voted for the Ryan budget which cuts Medicaid funding by 1/3. What do you have to say families like mine when our loved ones get kicked out of nursing homes because we can't afford to pay \$70,000 for nursing home care out of pocket? How can you justify putting that strain on working families – when at the same time you voted to give millionaires more tax breaks?

Sandwich generation - My husband and I are both working hard to stay ahead and help our kids go to college. Because we're both at work all day, we can't care for my mother at home and so she's in a nursing home. And like most people in nursing homes, she is dependent on Medicaid. You voted to cut \$800 Billion dollars from Medicaid – shifting costs to states and working families like ours. What are we to do if you take away her nursing home care?

Independence - The budget you voted for increases the cost of nursing home care for millions of families and reduces the quality of home care while also slashing support to help people with disabilities live independently. It shreds the social safety net during the hardest economic times that many families have seen in years. And it gives more tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires. How dare you?

Deficit reduction choices – In the Ryan budget, you voted for changes to Medicaid that would result in less federal Medicaid money going to states which puts more strain on our state budget or forces our state to cut off the elderly, kids and people with disabilities. Would you support raising taxes on the rich, closing corporate tax loopholes and ending subsidies for big oil to balance the budget instead of cuts to Medicaid?