



This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your

colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit [www.nytreprints.com](http://www.nytreprints.com) for

samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

---

May 15, 2011

# Gingrich Calls G.O.P.'s Medicare Plan Too Radical

By RAYMOND HERNANDEZ

WASHINGTON — Days after formally announcing his candidacy for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination, [Newt Gingrich](#) on Sunday sharply criticized a plan by House Republicans that would drastically overhaul [Medicare](#), the federal health care program for retirees.

Mr. Gingrich, the former speaker of the House who led a conservative resurgence in the 1990s, said the Republican Medicare plan was “too big a jump” for Americans and compared it to the health care overhaul championed by President Obama.

“I’m against Obamacare, which is imposing radical change, and I would be against a conservative imposing radical change,” Mr. Gingrich said on the NBC program “Meet the Press.”

“I don’t think right-wing social engineering is any more desirable than left-wing social engineering,” he said. “I don’t think imposing radical change from the right or the left is a very good way for a free society to operate.”

The Republican plan calls for the most extensive overhaul of the Medicare program since it was created. It would end direct payment for medical care and would instead subsidize health coverage for older Americans.

While House Republicans have portrayed the plan as a way to address the nation's long-term financial problems, Democrats and their allies have sought to seize on public concerns over it, arguing that the changes would hurt the elderly, an influential voting group.

After facing waves of protests in public meetings after introducing the Medicare proposal in early April, House Republicans have begun signaling that they are prepared to shelve it, at least for now.

In leveling criticism at the Republican Medicare proposal, Mr. Gingrich appeared to be acknowledging the political difficulties and risk of abruptly changing a highly popular entitlement program.

"I think we need a national conversation to get to a better Medicare solution for seniors," Mr. Gingrich said, suggesting that any Medicare overhaul would have to include a system in which beneficiaries voluntarily opt out of the program.

Also on Sunday, Representative Paul D. Ryan of Wisconsin, the chairman of the House Budget Committee and the author of the Medicare proposal, defended the plan during an appearance on the CNN program "State of the Union."

"We have got to reform this program for the next generation if we're going to save it for the next generation, and that's what we're proposing to do," Mr. Ryan said.

Mr. Ryan also addressed his own future in the interview, saying he was considering running for the seat now held by Senator Herb Kohl, a four-term Democrat from Wisconsin who announced on Friday that he would not seek re-election next year.



More in Politics (4 of 31 articles)

OPEN

## **Political Memo: Idea Rebounds: Automatic Cuts to Curb Deficits**

[Read More »](#)

