



Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

Re: "Medicare for All: What it is, what it isn't"

2 messages

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>
To: truthometer@politifact.com

Tue, Feb 19, 2019 at 3:10 PM

Dear Truth-O-Meter,

PolitiFact's Q&A article on Medicare For All appears to contain a very careless and hugely misleading mistake.

The article refers to Sen. Bernie Sanders' proposals for covering estimated costs of his plan (bold emphasis added):

A study of Medicare for All from the libertarian-oriented [Mercatus Center at George Mason University](#) put the cost at more than \$32 trillion over 10 years. Health finance expert [Kenneth Thorpe at Emory University](#) looked at Sanders' earlier version during the 2016 campaign and figured it would cost about \$25 trillion over a 10-year span.

Where would the money come from?

Sanders [offered some possibilities](#). **He would redirect current government spending of about \$2 trillion per year into the program.** To that, he would raise taxes on income over \$250,000, reaching a 52 percent marginal rate on income over \$10 million. He suggested a wealth tax on the top 0.1 percent of households.

[The Mercatus Center](#) and [Thorpe*](#) estimates (like [the earlier Friedman estimate](#)) both concern the *added* costs of M4A proposals. I tweeted at the author of the article, Jon Greenberg, and asked where he sees the \$2 trillion per year redirected into M4A. I received no answer. But [looking at the document](#), it seems to have come from this section:

Today, the United States spends more than \$3.2 trillion a year on health care. About sixty-five percent of this funding, over \$2 trillion, is spent on publicly financed health care programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and other programs.

Nothing else in the document appears to even remotely resemble funding of \$2 trillion per year in the existing budget.

The problem should be obvious. The article moves from estimates of added costs to Sanders' supposed proposals for covering those added costs. The lead item is \$2 trillion per year in apparently *existing* costs. It's hard to exaggerate the degree to which this type of reasoning misleads PolitiFact readers. Simply put, existing government health care costs cannot in any way defray an estimate of added government health care costs.

PolitiFact's explanation should distinguish between existing costs and added costs. And it goes without saying that the article should not portray existing costs as a means of covering added costs. That's magic, not math.

As it stands, the article gives an extremely distorted view of how the nation might afford M4A.

PolitiFact should provide a public explanation if not a correction/clarification.

*The Thorpe estimate does a poor job of describing itself as an estimate of added costs, but it is clearly a response to the Friedman estimate, which is an estimate of added costs

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Sincerely,

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To: truthometer@politifact.com, webstaff@poynter.org

Sat, Feb 23, 2019 at 12:23 AM

9/15/2019

Gmail - Re: "Medicare for All: What it is, what it isn't"

Sending this again because the usual auto-reply notice failed to end up in my inbox.

CC Poynter Institute

[Quoted text hidden]