M Gmail   **Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>**

Trump-O-Meter entries mislead on Medicaid cuts
4 messages

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>   Thu, Mar 29, 2018 at 10:58 AM
To: alczx2@mail.missouri.edu, Louis Jacobson <loujaco@gmail.com>, Angie Holan <holan@politifact.com>, Aaron Sharockman <asharockman@tampabay.com>

Dear PolitiFact folks,

As most of you are probably aware, PolitiFact rated charges the ACA cut Medicare as "Half True" or worse (mostly worse, were you to tell the truth about your past ratings).

Fact checkers have now been enlightened in the age of Trump, and are evidently able to tell that reductions to the growth of programs like Medicaid and Medicare are rightly termed cuts without the need for scare quotes.

The inconsistency isn't pretty, but it's made worse when fact checkers like PolitiFact no longer see the importance of distinguishing between cuts to a projected future baseline and cuts compared to present spending.

That's where the Trump-O-Meter comes in.

Louis Jacobson:

> Over 10 years, Trump's 2019 budget proposal says it would cut Medicare spending by a cumulative $236 billion, including by reductions in "waste" and "fraud" and by changing the way drugs are priced and paid for in the program.

Is that a cut relative to current levels or a cut to future growth? Does it matter now like it did during the previous administration?

Jacobson again:

> The budget proposal does call for $236 billion in Medicare reductions, which would contradict Trump's campaign promise.

Are those reductions to current levels or reductions to a future spending baseline? Is it now okay to leave it unclear, like Republican critics of the ACA once did ("False" "Mostly False" "Half True")?

Not to worry! The earlier Trump-O-Meter entry by Allison Colburn clarifies things.

Colburn:

> The 2018 White House budget proposal released in May left Medicare benefits largely untouched compared with Medicaid, which would see a more than $600 billion decrease over 10 years compared to current spending levels. Still, Medicare spending would decrease by more than $50 billion in the next decade compared with current levels.

Ah. So the proposed budget cuts spending relative to current levels and not relative to a future spending baseline?

Are you completely sure about that?

Table S–3. Baseline by Category [1]
(In billions of dollars)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Totals 2018-2022	Totals 2018-2027
Outlays:														
Discretionary programs:														
Defense	585	592	600	623	640	653	665	676	695	713	732	750	3,181	6,747
Non-defense	600	624	618	629	637	650	659	672	688	705	722	739	3,193	6,718
Subtotal, discretionary programs	1,185	1,215	1,219	1,251	1,277	1,303	1,323	1,348	1,384	1,418	1,453	1,488	6,373	13,464
Mandatory programs:														
Social Security	910	946	1,005	1,070	1,138	1,207	1,281	1,362	1,448	1,537	1,630	1,728	5,702	13,406
Medicare	588	593	582	646	701	757	854	885	913	1,012	1,106	1,195	3,541	8,650
Medicaid	368	378	408	432	454	480	507	537	570	604	648	688	2,280	5,328
Other mandatory programs	560	656	589	626	643	670	717	719	726	759	821	846	3,244	7,115
Subtotal, mandatory programs	2,427	2,573	2,583	2,774	2,936	3,114	3,359	3,503	3,656	3,912	4,205	4,457	14,767	34,500
Net interest	240	276	316	372	431	487	542	592	634	670	706	741	2,147	5,489
Total outlays	3,853	4,065	4,118	4,398	4,643	4,905	5,224	5,443	5,673	6,000	6,364	6,687	23,287	53,453

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Sincerely,

Bryan W. White
editor
zebrafactcheck.com

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>   Wed, Apr 4, 2018 at 1:34 PM
To: International Fact-Checking Network <factchecknet@poynter.org>

Dear International Fact-Checking Network (Alexios, Daniel, Dulce)

With PolitiFact's annual renewal date approaching, I hope that you will see that this reaches the indepedent assessor.

These emails spell out for the PolitiFact team the way it misled readers with a "Trump-O-Meter" item that suggests a proposed Trump administration budget would cut Medicare spending compared to a current spending level baseline instead of a future projection spending baseline.

This email received no reply from any of the PolitiFact staff to which it was sent. PolitiFact apparently effected no change at all to the misleading (false) article.

I pointed PolitiFact toward one of its past ratings of Medicare cuts, about which PolitiFact Virginia said the following:

> The Affordable Care Act contains about $564 billion in cost-savings measures for Medicare over 10 years. But the definition of a cut means there would be a reduction in spending. That's not the case here. Medicare spending will continue to expand. The law will slow the projected rate of growth.

A Trump-O-Meter rating from 2017 contains the following (bold emphasis added):

> The 2018 White House budget proposal released in May left Medicare benefits largely untouched compared with Medicaid, which would see a more than $600 billion decrease over 10 years compared to current spending levels. Still, **Medicare spending would decrease by more than $50 billion in the next decade compared with current levels**.

Should a fact checker falsely pretend that its reasoning is consistent?

The IFCN does need some kind of policy making the complaint process at least a little transparent.

I suppose we'll see how transparent it is when the second assessment of PolitiFact appears.

Cheers.

[Quoted text hidden]

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>   Wed, Apr 4, 2018 at 1:35 PM
To: International Fact-Checking Network <factchecknet@poynter.org>

"independent assessor"

[Quoted text hidden]

International Fact-Checking Network <factchecknet@poynter.org>   Wed, Apr 4, 2018 at 1:48 PM
To: Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>
Cc: International Fact-Checking Network <factchecknet@poynter.org>

Thanks Bryan, added to the file.

On Wed, Apr 4, 2018 at 1:34 PM, Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com> wrote:

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International Fact-Checking Network
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