

Medicare; THE GAZETTE, KCRG-TV9 FACTCHECKER

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Body

INTRODUCTION

'But Mariannette Miller-Meeks blames the rising cost of health care on Medicare. And praised a radical plan ending Medicare's guarantee, costing seniors thousands more. Miller-Meeks would even raise the retirement age.'

Source of claim: TV ad from the Dave Loebsack campaign.

ANALYSIS

Health care is a key issue for Mariannette Miller-Meeks' campaign, given her career as an ophthalmologist and the director for the Iowa Department of Public Health.

In 2009, Miller-Meeks posted videos on YouTube looking at issues facing the nation's health care system. In it, she blames the rising cost of health care in part on Medicare.

'If you look at the cost of health care in the United States, the rapid rise began in 1970,' she says in the video. 'This is because Medicare was instituted in 1965. As seniors became more adept at utilizing the Medicare system to pay for care they had previously not accessed, the cost escalated.' Miller-Meeks is using Medicare as an example of the larger issue that she says is to blame for rising costs, namely '(lack of) competition and insurance.' In the video, Miller-Meeks argues that patients with insurance, such as Medicare, get treatments they don't need because they don't directly bear the cost. She also blames government mandates on what insurance covers, such as birth control, for forcing some people to pay for more coverage than they need.

The ad also references a tweet Miller-Meeks made supporting a Medicare Premium Support program in Paul Ryan's 2012 budget proposal. That program would replace Medicare insurance coverage by giving Medicare recipients a fixed dollar amount to buy insurance on the private marketplace.

The Congressional Budget Office released a report in 2013 that looked at two models for a premium support program. Depending on the model used, the report showed costs to beneficiaries could rise 11 percent or fall 6 percent. Both models showed a net savings in taxpayer spending on Medicare. In 2010, Miller-Meeks told Radio Iowa she supported the idea of raising the eligibility age for Medicare benefits from 65 to 67, but only for future generations.

CONCLUSION

MOSTLY TRUE

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This ad presents accurate information in a somewhat misleading manner. Miller-Meeks used Medicare as an example of why health care costs are rising in her 2009 video but she ultimately is blaming expanding insurance coverage and government mandates.

Miller-Meeks also backed Paul Ryan's 2012 plan for Medicare premium support payments but it is unclear whether that will lead to rising costs to seniors. Even the CBO report notes 'as the agency refines its modeling approach and considers alternative options for a premium support system, its findings could change.' While this ad lacks some much-needed context, the limited facts presented are accurate, which is why we rate it mostly true.

- Fact Checker was researched and reported by Adam Carros. Comments: (319) 368-8604; adam.carros@kcrg.com

Graphic

Sy Bean/The Gazette Mariannette Miller-Meeks debates Rep. Dave Loebsack on IPTV 's Iowa Press debate series on Aug. 28 at City High School in Iowa City.

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