Written by A. Barry Rand Wednesday, 19 December 2012 00:00

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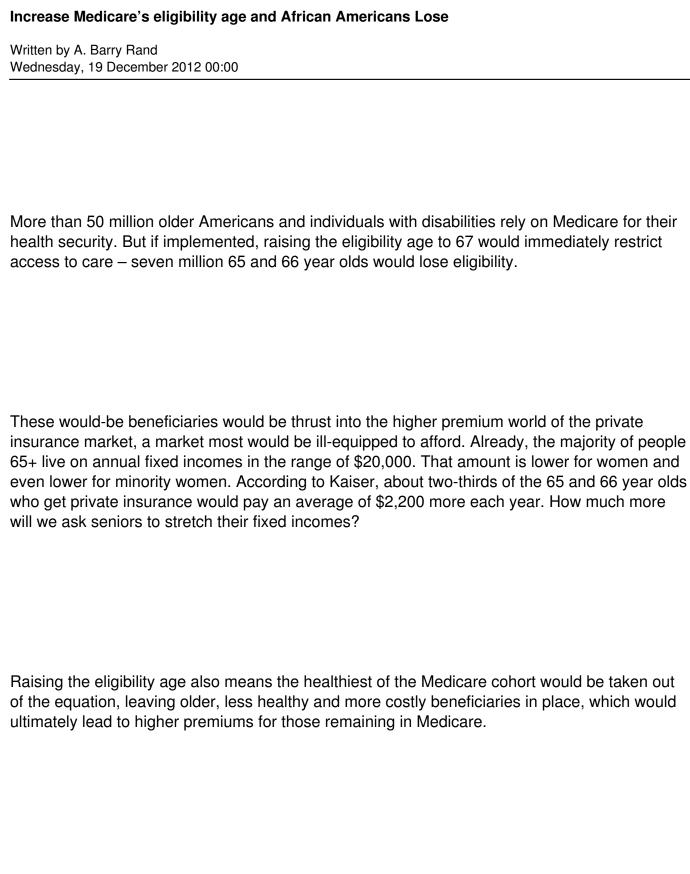
"For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong."

- H.L. Mencken

Wrong. The proposal to raise Medicare's eligibility age from 65 to 67 in 2014 is wrong. Who stands to gain by this approach? Not the government. Not current and future seniors. And most definitely not older African Americans and other older minorities – these groups stand to lose the most.

Raising the Medicare eligibility age would actually cost much more than it would save, in dollars and in quality of life. A Kaiser Family Foundation study found the proposal would save the federal government \$5.7 billion in 2014, but at the same time impose id="mce_marker"1.4 billion more in spending on individuals, employers and state governments.

Our goal must be to strengthen Medicare, not weaken it. Reducing costs for Medicare and the health care system overall are critical to making the most effective use of our resources and decreasing the economic burden to consumers, providers, insurers, the government – anyone with skin in this game. And really, it's not a game. Raising the Medicare eligibility age doesn't move us forward; it takes us back and weakens one of the most successful fail-safes ever created in the U.S.



But what makes it worse for African Americans? First, the longevity factor. A key reason proponents support raising the eligibility age is increased life expectancy in the U.S. But African Americans haven't experienced as dramatic an increase as other populations. Especially not African American men – average life expectancy is 70 years compared to 76 years for non-Hispanic Whites. Raising the eligibility age would amount to a major benefit cut for African Americans, who'd potentially have fewer years to collect benefits and therefore, lower lifetime benefits.

Increase Medicare's eligibility age and African Americans Lose

