

Lower Costs, Better Care for West Virginians

There is an urgent need to lower health costs, expand coverage, and reduce racial health disparities across West Virginia. That is why it is essential to ensure critical health care measures supported by President Biden remain in upcoming budget reconciliation legislation, specifically empowering Medicare to negotiate for lower drug prices for all Americans, creating a federal solution to close the Medicaid coverage gap, expanding Medicare benefits to include dental, vision, and hearing, and making the premium reductions included in the American Rescue Plan permanent, so West Virginians can continue to access low-cost coverage.

Americans support bold action to lower health costs and curb soaring drug prices, with [88 percent](#) in favor of allowing Medicare to negotiate with pharmaceutical corporations to lower prices. President Biden is committed to tackling these issues head on, demonstrated by his commitment to expanding health coverage through [enhanced subsidies](#), closing the [Medicaid coverage gap](#), and [support](#) for Medicare drug price negotiation.

West Virginians depend on affordable health care, expanded access to coverage, and drug pricing reform to live healthy lives. Empowering the federal government to negotiate prescription drug prices would save Americans more than [\\$150 billion](#) at the pharmacy counter and create an additional [\\$500 billion](#) in savings for the federal government that could be reinvested to [reduce premiums](#), [expand Medicare benefits](#) to include dental, vision, and hearing, and close the Medicaid coverage gap in the 12 states that have [refused to accept expansion](#). We must act now.

The American Rescue Plan Has Helped 19,381 West Virginians Access Affordable Care

- **Strong Marketplace Enrollment.** Nearly [20,000](#) West Virginia residents have signed up for coverage through the Marketplace in 2021.
- **Increasing Health Coverage Access For Thousands of West Virginians.** The American Rescue Plan has [reduced or eliminated](#) Marketplace premiums for thousands in West Virginia. Under the plan, [16,900](#) uninsured West Virginians are newly eligible for health coverage tax credits and 3,900 individuals have access to coverage with zero dollar premiums.
- **Meaningful Savings On Premiums.** Premium savings under the American Rescue Plan benefit all Americans. For example, a 60-year-old couple with an annual income of \$75,000 will see their monthly premiums drop from \$2,778, to just \$531, saving more than [\\$2,247](#) each month.
- **Improving Maternal Health Access.** For new mothers, the American Rescue Plan has created a pathway to coverage, providing states the opportunity to extend [postpartum coverage](#) under Medicaid from 60 days to 12 months following birth. West Virginia is taking action and has [passed legislation](#) to seek federal approval for expansion.

Lowering Prescription Drug Costs

- **Drug Price Hikes Are Outpacing Inflation.** In 2019, American prescription drug spending soared to [\\$369.7 billion](#), an increase of 5.7 percent, more than [three times](#) the inflation rate for the same period.
- **One Quarter Of Americans Struggle To Access Essential Medications.** [Nearly one in four](#) Americans taking prescription drugs struggles to afford needed medications, with 29 percent reporting not taking medications as instructed within the past year due to cost.
- **Drug Price Negotiation Would Save Billions.** The single most effective measure to bring down drug costs is to empower Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices. Negotiation would save patients more than [\\$150 billion](#) and create [\\$500 billion](#) in savings for the federal government.
- **Reinvestment Of Savings.** When the federal government saves on drug costs, those funds become available to [reduce premiums](#), [expand Medicare benefits](#) to include dental, vision, and hearing, and close the [Medicaid coverage gap](#) in the 12 states that have [refused to accept expansion](#).
- **Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Is Overwhelming Popular.** [Nearly nine in ten](#) Americans support empowering Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices.

Drug Prices In West Virginia

- In 2019, West Virginians spent [nearly \\$52 million](#) in cash on prescription drugs.
- In 2020, [41 percent](#) of registered voters in West Virginia reported that they or someone in their household stopped taking a prescription drug due to cost. Polling has shown that [74 percent](#) of West Virginians are concerned about the cost of prescription drugs.
- In 2018, total Medicare Part D prescription drug spending per enrollee in West Virginia was [\\$4,058](#) - higher than the U.S. average of \$3,612.
- [Hundreds of thousands](#) of West Virginians have chronic conditions like cancer, diabetes, and asthma that require prescription drugs for treatment and management.
- A 2020 AARP poll found that [83 percent](#) of West Virginia voters believe that transparency laws would help control the price of prescription drugs.

Expanding Coverage

- **Millions Nationwide Would Gain Stable Coverage.** [4.2 million](#) uninsured people would gain coverage if the American Rescue Plan's subsidies are made permanent, and millions more would continue to save on health care costs.
- **Permanent Health Coverage Subsidies Would Benefit Older West Virginians.** Nearly 20,000 West Virginians' selected a plan on the Marketplace in 2021, with older adults between [55 and 64](#) making up more than a third of enrollees. The American

Rescue Plan offers [significant relief](#) for older individuals, including those at 400 percent of the federal poverty level.

Expanding Medicare Benefits

- **More than 290,000 West Virginians Would Benefit From Expanded Coverage.** Nearly [38 million](#) traditional Medicare enrollees would gain dental, vision, and hearing coverage if Medicare benefits were expanded. Due to lack of coverage, [nearly half](#) of Medicare beneficiaries did not seek dental care in the past year.
- **Medicare Beneficiaries Are 25 Percent Of West Virginia's Residents.** In 2018, [one in four](#) West Virginians were Medicare beneficiaries. Recent reports have found between [47](#) and [64](#) percent of Medicare beneficiaries do not have dental coverage, [74 percent](#) lack vision coverage, and [76 percent](#) go without hearing coverage.
- **Income And Racial Inequity Increase Health Disparities.** Half of all Medicare beneficiaries live on annual incomes below [\\$29,650](#), pushing dental, vision, and hearing coverage out of reach. For [beneficiaries of color](#) or those living in [rural](#) areas, accessing these essential benefits has become increasingly challenging.

Senator Joe Manchin Is Standing Up For West Virginians' Care

Senator Manchin Was An Enthusiastic Supporter Of The American Rescue Plan, Providing Relief For Thousands Of West Virginian Families. Manchin [voted for](#) the American Rescue Plan, historic legislation that includes measures to expand coverage and to dramatically lower health care costs for thousands of West Virginia families. In addition to providing critical pandemic relief, the ARP lowers premiums for people purchasing coverage through the marketplaces and expands access to financial assistance for more middle-class families. Manchin [praised the law](#), saying “The COVID-19 pandemic has tested our entire nation and through it all, West Virginians have banded together to keep our loved ones safe. The end is within reach and this COVID-19 relief package is what West Virginia needs to put this pandemic behind us once and for all.”

Senator Manchin Supports Efforts To Allow Medicare To Negotiate Drug Prices. Sen. Manchin is a [cosponsor](#) of the Empowering Medicare Seniors to Negotiate Drug Prices Act, legislation which would allow for Medicare to negotiate the best possible price of prescription drugs to cut costs.