

# PROTECT OUR CARE

**\*\* Weekly Wrap Up \*\***

[September 25 - October 1, 2021]



*A mobile billboard appeared at the Congressional Baseball game calling on U.S. Reps. Scott Peters (D-CA-52), Kathleen Rice (D-NY-04), and Kurt Schrader (D-OR-05) to support Medicare negotiation.*

## U.S. Representatives Colin Allred and Sharice Davids Call for Immediate Action to Lower Drug Prices As Congress Closes In On Budget Agreement



**Watch the Event Here**

U.S. Representatives Colin Allred (D-TX-32) and Sharice Davids (D-KS-03) joined Protect Our Care for a virtual press conference to call for passing all of President Biden's health care priorities in the Build Back Better budget package, including giving Medicare the power to negotiate for drug prices. The event follows a new op-ed from Reps. Allred and Davids, along with Cindy Axne (D-IA-03), Andy Kim (D-NJ-03), and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA-07), outlining the strong case for allowing Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices.

President Biden and Democrats are leading the charge to include Medicare negotiation and other key health care priorities in the Build Back Better package, but the fight is not over: Big Pharma is ramping up its lobbying and scare tactics to protect its profits and lie to the American people. This event made clear that this is not the time for half measures; in order to meet the demands of voters across the political spectrum, Congress must give Medicare the power to negotiate for lower drug prices for all Americans.

“For too long hard-working families have been forced to pay higher and higher prices for the medicines they need,” said Representative Colin Allred (D-TX-32). “It’s why Congress must act and include strong reforms that allow Medicare to negotiate lower prices across the board. I know what it is like to campaign hard on this issue and win. The American people overwhelmingly support this, and I will keep fighting until we get this done.”

“We have an opportunity to make a difference in countless lives—and not only that, but including the ability for Medicare to negotiate prices in the reconciliation bill can help pay for other critical priorities for Kansas, like closing the Medicaid coverage gap and continuing subsidies for folks who buy their own insurance,” said Representative Sharice Davids (D-KS-03). “Of all the statistics we share about the impact of allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices, here’s a big one: 72% of registered voters in my district worry that Congress won’t do enough to stand up to pharmaceutical companies and lower the prices of prescription drugs. We can’t let them be right.”

“This week, lawmakers have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform health care for millions of Americans,” said Protect Our Care Communications Director Anne Shoup.

“Medicare negotiation is absolutely central to the Build Back Better package, and it will help American families who are sick and tired of paying three times more for their prescriptions than people in other countries. The proposal creates half a trillion dollars in savings that can be reinvested in expanding Medicare benefits, closing the coverage gap, and keeping

premium costs down on the ACA marketplaces. Leaders like Representatives Allred and Davids know now is not the time to back down. Congress must stand up to Big Pharma once and for all and deliver lower drug prices now.”

## **House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn & Rep. Lauren Underwood Join Protect Our Care to Discuss Urgent Need to Lower Health Costs & Expand Coverage in Budget Package**

**[Listen to the Call Here.](#)**

U.S. House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn (D-SC-06) and U.S. Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14) joined Protect Our Care and health care storytellers for a virtual press conference to discuss the urgent need to close the Medicaid coverage gap and make the American Rescue Plan’s premium tax credits permanent in upcoming budget legislation. During the call, speakers made clear that these steps to expand coverage and reduce costs will transform health care for millions of working families and that Congress must act now to pass these historic measures. An estimated seven million people would gain coverage as a result of these two policies alone.

President Biden included both of these measures as part of the Build Back Better proposal, but as Congress continues to negotiate, it is essential they remain in the final package. Polling shows strong, unwavering support among voters across the political spectrum for all of the Build Back Better health care priorities.

“Today, 12 states still have not expanded Medicaid, and one of those 12 happens to be my home state of South Carolina where 200,000 of my fellow South Carolinians are uninsured who would be eligible for Medicaid if our state expanded -- 100,000 of them fall into the so-called coverage gap,” said House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn. “Today, we have an opportunity to do something about this and we ought not wait on somebody else to do it. I think it would be un-American of us to leave citizens in these 12 states behind as we go on to improve other parts of health care services in our country. I’m hopeful that as we move forward, we do what is necessary to bring those people into coverage.”

“Health care is a right, not a privilege, and we must advance universal coverage and health equity in the Build Back Better Act. Thanks to the two-year version of my Health Care Affordability Act that was included in the American Rescue Plan, we’ve cut our nation’s uninsured rate, provided substantial savings for individuals and families, and taken the most

significant step towards health equity since the Affordable Care Act was signed into law. But if we fail to act now and make the advance premium tax credit expansion permanent, all of this progress will be wiped out in just two years,” said Representative Lauren Underwood. “We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make high-quality health care affordable and accessible to all; the American people are counting on us to get this done, and we must deliver.”

"For several years, my three daughters and I went without health care and insurance because I could not afford it. It was a difficult and unacceptable space that many other lower-income American families are currently in," said Carrie Duran, a Medicaid expansion recipient from New Hampshire. "Thanks to expanded Medicaid in my state, I no longer have to deny myself and my family health care. I urge lawmakers in states without expanded Medicaid to think of the importance of assisting lower-income families and to support ending the coverage gap."

“Far too many Americans are struggling to afford health care in this country,” said Protect Our Care Executive Director Brad Woodhouse. “More than two million people are locked out of coverage entirely in 12 states that have rejected Medicaid expansion, and millions more stand to benefit from reducing health care costs for people purchasing coverage on their own -- including older adults, farmers, middle-class business owners and more. These steps are essential to reducing stark racial disparities in health coverage and ensuring people have access to the care they need during the pandemic and for years to come.”

## **U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen, Dr. Joshua Sharfstein of Johns Hopkins, Protect Our Care Sound the Alarm on Impact of Government Shutdown Amidst Pandemic**

**[Watch the Event Here](#)**

U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Dr. Joshua Sharfstein of Johns Hopkins, and Protect Our Care’s Coronavirus War Room held a virtual press conference to discuss the damaging ramifications of Republicans' dangerous willingness to shut down the government during the ongoing pandemic.

Republicans voted to shut down the government in the middle of a pandemic where 120,000 people a day are getting infected with COVID-19 and 2,000 people a day are dying. Republicans have forced a government shutdown before in order to suit their political needs, but as Dr. Fauci puts it, this would be “the worst time in the world” for a government

shutdown, as economic recovery is already in a fragile position, ICUs are clogged and turning people away, new variants are raging, and children are getting sick at rapid rates. Despite recent news of a potential deal to avoid a shutdown, Republicans are still willing to let the livelihood of the American people hang in the balance as they refuse to reach an agreement on the debt ceiling.



“The fact is Republicans are once again willing to put our economy and all government operations at risk simply for political purposes,” said U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD). “The Federal government has proven very necessary in addressing the health and economic challenges we're facing. A government shutdown would be bad anytime but the pandemic has underscored the importance of people coming together to take action to address economic fallout and provide vaccines and essential care. Yet, even at this point of crisis, we saw Republicans in the Senate cast their vote to use the filibuster to block a vote to keep the US government open which would provide critical emergency relief.”

“This remains an incredibly difficult time for health in the US, for everyone no matter their political party, as 2,000 people die per day from COVID. This government shutdown is a massive distraction to stop from helping families of all backgrounds across the country,” said Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Professor of the Practice in Health Policy and Management at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. “You cannot carry out critical activities if workers are furloughed or out of action. During a shutdown, the CDC could furlough more than 50% of their staff. The projections are mostly positive barring any new and destructive variants but we have to follow through on our protection measures.

“Republicans have proven that they will stop at nothing to sabotage a pandemic response—even if it means forcing a government shutdown as Americans continue to suffer,” said Protect Our Care Executive Director, Brad Woodhouse. “This is just the latest



effort to undermine the administration's fight against the pandemic. As Americans are faced with a fragile economy, children are getting sicker, and cases rise, Republicans have chosen to shamelessly fight proven effective measures such as mask and vaccine mandates, undermine science and attack experts like Dr. Fauci, and push conspiracy theories and disinformation that would harm not protect those most vulnerable."

## **NEW RADIO AD: AZ Health Care Advocate Will Humble Urges Senator Sinema to Let Medicare Negotiate Drug Prices**

*[Listen to the Radio Ad Here](#)*

Protect Our Care announced a new radio ad calling for Senator Sinema to meet the demands of her constituents and support giving Medicare the power to negotiate with drug companies for lower prices. The ad features Will Humble, the Executive Director for the Arizona Public Health Association, who explains that Arizonans pay three times more for drugs than people in other countries while Big Pharma continues to rake in record profits and hike prices on Americans. Humble makes clear that giving Medicare the power to negotiate lower prices is the solution to the broken drug pricing system. Democrats' proposal to allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices is supported by 90% of all Americans and remains central to President Biden's Build Back Better agenda.

The ad comes as Congress is closing in on a budget agreement that will transform the lives of American families nationwide. President Biden and Democrats are leading the charge to include Medicare negotiation and other key health care priorities in the Build Back Better package, but the fight is not over: Big Pharma is fighting back with lobbying and scare tactics to protect its profits and lie to the American people. The ad makes clear that Senator Sinema must support the health care provisions of the Build Back Better Act, including giving Medicare the power to negotiate for lower drug prices for all Americans. The ad will run in Phoenix for the next week.

"Arizonians from all walks of life are fed up with skyrocketing drug prices, and they are calling on Senator Sinema to do the right thing by allowing Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices," said Protect Our Care Arizona State Director Morgan Tucker. "Will Humble knows the drug pricing system is broken and Arizonans are getting ripped off. Congress is closer than ever to reining in Big Pharma's greed, but with Republicans already bought and paid for, every Democrat needs to get on board and pass the Build Back Better legislation now."

## **MEMO: #1 Item in Build Back Better is Prescription Drug Prices**

Congress continues to debate whether to give Medicare the power to negotiate lower prescription drug prices or keep the monopoly in place where drug companies dictate the prices for patients.

While Congress debates and Big Pharma tries to threaten political retribution, the American people have already spoken.

According to polls conducted by four of the top pollsters in the Democratic Party, the #1 element of President Biden's Build Back Better budget is giving Medicare the power to negotiate prescription drug prices.

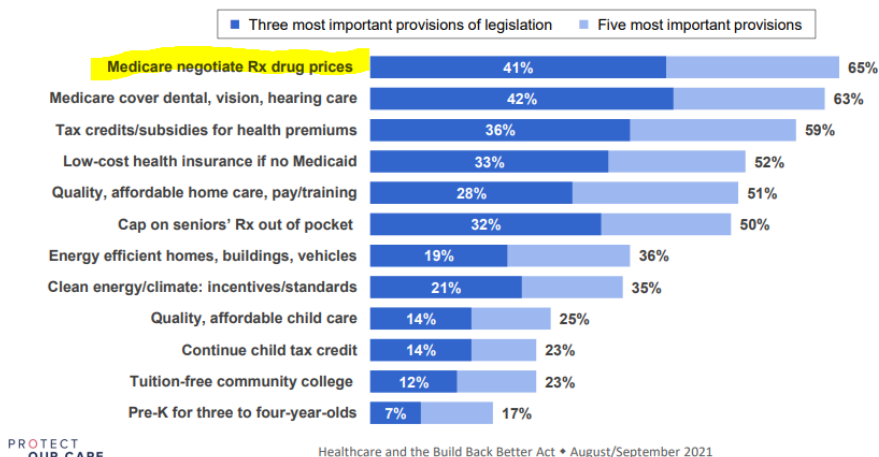
See for yourself.

1. NEW. ALG Polling's John Anzalone recently conducted a survey across 48 battleground congressional districts for Build Back Together. From the memo:

“Allowing Medicare to negotiate lower prices was the most popular of the 16 components of the Build Back Better plan tested. Over two-thirds of battleground district voters (71%) say this component makes them more likely to support the reconciliation plan. It is especially popular with seniors, but also the most popular component among both Independents and those voters who are persuadable on the reconciliation plan.”

2. Geoff Garin of Hart Research recently completed a national survey for Protect Our Care which found Medicare negotiating lower prices for prescription drugs was the most important element in driving support for the Build Back Better package (65%). From the report:

## The healthcare provisions are the most important elements in driving support for the package.

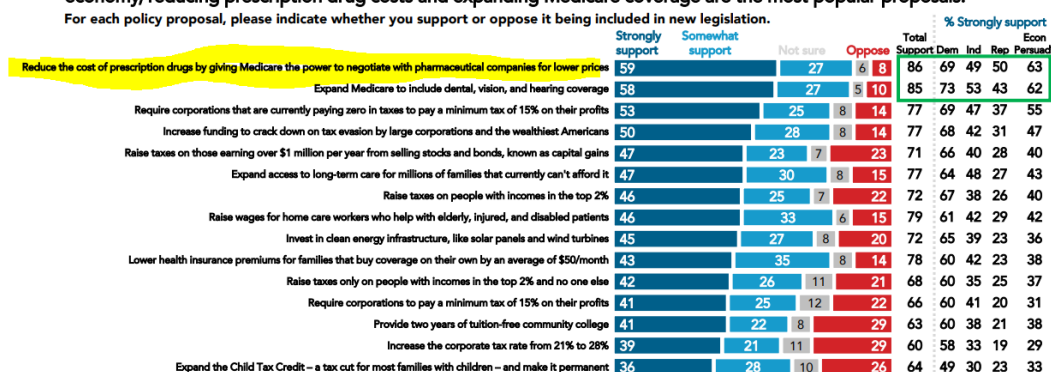


3. Global Strategy Group and GBAO recently completed a regular survey for Navigator Research that found Medicare negotiating to bring down the cost of prescription drugs was the most popular element with 86% support. From their [report](#):

## All Parts of the Plan Are Popular, Especially Medicare Negotiation and Expanding Medicare

Among persuadable Americans\* who support new economic legislation but disapprove of Biden's handling of the economy, reducing prescription drug costs and expanding Medicare coverage are the most popular proposals.

For each policy proposal, please indicate whether you support or oppose it being included in new legislation.



## PHOTOS: Continued Action to Advocate for Lower Costs & Better Care As Congress Closes In On Budget Agreement



Protect Our Care continued its events and activities calling on Congress to deliver lower costs and better care to American families by passing all of President Biden's health care priorities in the Build Back Better budget package. Congress is now closing in on a budget agreement that will transform the lives of American families nationwide. President Biden and Democrats are leading the charge to include Medicare negotiation and other key health care priorities in the Build Back Better package, but the fight is not over: Big Pharma is ramping up its lobbying and scare tactics to protect its profits and lie to the American people. These activities will make clear that this is not the time for half measures; Congress must act now to give Medicare the power to negotiate for lower drug prices for all Americans.

### NATIONAL

**LITE-BRITE:** Protect Our Care hosted a Lite-Brite demonstration with activists outside of PhRMA's headquarters in D.C. to call for an end to Big Pharma's greed which forces millions of patients to choose between affording rent and groceries, or paying for their prescription drug costs. As Congress is in the midst of negotiating a final budget agreement, the event made clear that this is not the time for half measures, and Congress must act now to give Medicare the power to negotiate for lower drug prices for all Americans.



[For more photos, click here.](#)

**MOBILE BILLBOARD:** A mobile billboard circled Capitol Hill and Nationals Park during the Congressional Baseball Game urging lawmakers to support giving Medicare the power to negotiate for lower drug prices in the upcoming budget legislation. The mobile billboard specifically called on U.S. Representatives Scott Peters (D-CA-52), Kathleen Rice (D-NY-04), and Kurt Schrader (D-OR-05) to meet the demands of their constituents and vote in favor of

Medicare negotiation. These lawmakers recently voted against negotiation in committee, but they still have the chance to support the final bill when it comes to the House floor.



## CALIFORNIA

**SOUND TRUCK:** A mobile billboard and sound truck sponsored by Protect Our Care appeared at Rep. Scott Peters' Office. The mobile billboard and sound truck broadcasted a radio ad calling out the congressman for his recent vote against giving Medicare the power to negotiate with drug companies for lower prices for all Americans -- a proposal supported by 94% of all Americans, and 9 in 10 voters in his district. Medicare negotiation is central to President Biden's Build Back Better proposal.



## In The States

### CLIPS

- Copper Courier Newsletter: Arizonans Call on Congress to Lower Prescription Drug Prices
- Copper Courier Instagram Video: Arizonans Call on Congress to Lower Prescription Drug Costs
- Bay to Bay News: Time is now to lower cost of prescription drugs
- San Diego Union Tribune: Opinion: Americans are dying over drug costs. It's time to let Medicare negotiate prices.

### CALIFORNIA

Thursday, September 30 — Press Visibility Event and Die-in Outside of Rep. Scott Peters' Office: Protect Our Care California held a press visibility event and die-in at Representative Scott Peters' (D-CA-52) office along with doctors and pharmacists, patients, advocates, and Peters' constituents. The event was held to protest Peters' vote in the Budget Committee to block the entire Build Back Better plan, including H.R.3, which would allow Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug prices for American seniors. Polls show the proposal has support from 90 percent of registered voters in Peters' district, but he continues to neglect the wellbeing of his constituents in order to side with Big Pharma executives who have flooded him with cash, contributing over \$860K to his coffers. Tombstones on site represented the nearly 110,000 seniors who will die in the coming year due to lack of access to affordable medications. The Grim Reaper, San Diego pharmacist Christopher Talbot, and Dr. Arnold Gass, a Veterans Affairs doctor and professor at UCSD, urged Rep. Peters to do the right thing for San Diegans and people across the country when the final bill goes to the



House floor. The event also featured a sidewalk chalk mural depicting the toll of exorbitant drug prices on the health and lives of all Americans. Christopher Talbot, a pharmacist for the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, spoke about learning about prescription drug prices in school, saying “It was absolutely mind-boggling that anyone could be expected to pay that much for prescription drugs. If it keeps going like this, people won't be able to keep going.” You can watch the event [here](#).



Thursday, September 30 — San Diego Union Tribune Op-Ed by Shelley Lyford, president of West Health on Lowering the Cost of Prescription Drugs: Protect Our Care California placed an [opinion piece in the San Diego Union Tribune](#) on the urgent need to give Medicare the power to negotiate fair drug prices. In the piece, West Health president Shelley Lyford discusses the necessity of lowering the cost of prescription drugs. “Congress has the best chance in over a decade to deliver on longstanding promises to lower prescription drug prices as part of a reconciliation bill designed to strengthen health care for seniors and shore up our economy and infrastructure. One of the most important components of this legislation is the Lower Drug Costs Now Act, which empowers Medicare to negotiate fair prices of prescription drugs for its more than 60 million beneficiaries and all Americans. These negotiated prices could also be extended to private commercial plans, saving money for employers and workers alike.” Lyford also notes the toll this has taken on Americans. “If passed, the result would be significant cost savings at the pharmacy counter, lower insurance premiums and less sickness and death from skipping prescribed medications because of an inability to pay — something 18 million Americans were forced to do earlier this year.” You can read the full op-ed [here](#).

## GEORGIA

Wednesday, September 29 — Lower Costs, Better Care Event with Congresswoman Carolyn Bourdeaux, Small Business Majority, Health Care Providers, and Patient Advocates:

Representative Carolyn Bourdeaux joined Protect Our Care Georgia for a virtual press conference to highlight how Medicaid Saves Lives Act and other healthcare provisions in President Biden’s Build Back Better proposal will lower costs and expand access to health care in Georgia and across the country. “Physicians take an oath to do no harm. It is time for our elected political leaders to do the same, said Dr. Harry Heinman, “Our collective failure to ensure that everyone in our country has access to affordable high-quality healthcare is harmful—leading to preventable death, disability, and worsening racial, economic, and geographic health inequities. The Medicaid Saves Lives Act is a critical step to ensuring that low income workers and their families have access to the coverage they need to live healthy productive lives.” You can watch the event [here](#).



## Local Headlines

### Alaska

- AP: [2nd Hospital In Alaska Begins Rationing Care](#)

### Arizona

- AP: [Arizona High Court Allows School Mask Ban Ruling To Stand](#)

- NPR: [Just Before Taking Effects, Arizona's School Mask Mandate Ban Ruled Unconstitutional](#)

#### Arkansas

- AP: [Arkansas Governor Allows State's Covid Emergency To End](#)
- AP: [Arkansas Bill Creates Antibody Exemption For Vaccine Mandate](#)
- AP: [Arkansas Court: State Can't Enforce Ban On Mask Mandates](#)

#### California

- AP: [LA Police, Fire Agencies Had Over 200 Covid-19 Outbreaks](#)
- AP: [Federal Judge Requires Vaccines For California Prison Staff](#)

#### Colorado

- AP: [Police Challenge To Denver Vaccine Mandate Is Dismissed](#)
- Colorado Newslite: [Drug Affordability Board Must Stand With Patients, Not Big Pharma \(Opinion\)](#)

#### Connecticut

- [House Votes To Extend Lamont's Covid Power Amid Protests](#)

#### Florida

- Axios: [How Florida Fails Those With Mental Illness](#)

#### Georgia

- AP: [Georgia Sees Spike In New Orleans 'Obamacare' Sign Ups](#)
- WRBL: [Georgia Senators Push For Medicaid Expansion, Republican Says It's 'Socialist Medicine' Policy](#)

#### Idaho

- AP: [Misinformation Leads To Animosity Toward Health Care Workers](#)
- AP: [Pandemic Has Dire Effects On Idaho Kids, Babies](#)

#### Iowa

- AP: [Judge Extends Order Halting Iowa School Mask Mandate Ban](#)
- AP: [Iowa School District Begins Own Covid-19 Testing Program](#)

#### Kansas

- The Kansas City Star: [Is Medicaid A Gift To The Poor? It Barely Touches America's Giveaways To The Rich](#)

#### Kentucky

- AP: [Website Helps Kentuckians Search For Antibody Treatment](#)

#### Louisiana

- AP: [Louisiana Schools Chief Scraps Covid Quarantine Suggestion](#)

#### Massachusetts

- The Boston Globe: [Massachusetts Faces Legal Challenges To Universal Mask Mandates In Public Schools](#)

#### Michigan

- AP: [Health Agencies Rescind Mask Orders Despite Governor's Vow](#)

#### Mississippi

- Clarion Ledger: [Medicaid Expansion In Mississippi: In The Southern Vernacular, Tate Ain't Gonna \(Opinion\)](#)



## Missouri

- AP: [Covid-Related Attacks Prompt Hospital To Issue Panic Buttons](#)
- The Joplin Globe: [Thousands Of Additional Missourians Eligible For Medicaid](#)

## Nevada

- AP: [Misinformation Bigger Challenge Than Virus Itself](#)

## New York

- AP: [Federal Judges: NYC Can Impose Vaccine Mandate On Teachers](#)
- Bloomberg: [New York Health Workers Win Religious Exemption To Vaccine](#)
- NPR: [New York May Use The National Guard To Replace Unvaccinated Health Care Workers](#)
- NYT: [A Federal Appeals Court Delays New York City's Vaccine Mandate For Teachers](#)
- Reuters: [New York Hospitals Fire, Suspend Staff Who Refuse Covid Vaccine](#)
- WSJ: [Vaccine Mandate Takes Effect In New York With Healthcare](#)

## South Carolina

- AP: [Federal Judge Overturns South Carolina School Mask Ban](#)

## Tennessee

- AP: [Third Judge Blocks Gov. Lee's Mask Opt Out In Schools](#)
- AP: [Federal Utility's Workers Have Until Nov. 22 For Covid Shots](#)
- Tennessean: [Disparities Created By Tennessee's Health Insurance Gap Will Close With Medicaid Expansion \(Opinion\)](#)

## Texas

- KHN: [Death In Dallas: One Family's Experience In The Medicaid Gap](#)

## Washington

- AP: [WA Worker Vaccination Increases Ahead Of Mandate Deadline](#)

## Wisconsin

- AP: [Wisconsin Assembly To Vote On \\$100 Million For Mental Health](#)

WXPR: Analysis: [WI Residents Prices Out Of Prescription Drug Market](#)