

'Medi-Facts' are distortions

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Jay Matzke's so-called "Medi-Facts" are distortions that don't stand up to serious examination (Gothenburg Times, 7/28). Matzke is misinformed that proposed changes to Medicare won't affect current beneficiaries.

Like the balanced budget measures in Congress, the CAP Act in the U.S. Senate would set an arbitrary federal spending limit triggering across-the-board cuts. One study by the Lewin Group found that the CAP Act would reduce Social Security benefits by 19% by 2021 and increase out-of-pocket costs for Medicare beneficiaries by \$391 per year. Cuts would go even deeper under a balanced budget amendment.

He also asserts that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) worsens Medicare's finances by taking \$500 million out of the program. It does just the opposite by reducing bloated subsidies to private Medicare Advantage plans and changing how Medicare pays doctors and hospitals to reward quality of care rather than volume. Medicare's Board of Trustees determined that these changes and others will extend the solvency of the Medicare Part A trust fund from 2017 to 2029.

Finally, Matzke refers to a purported "bribe" in the ACA. In fact, that provision prevents Nebraska and all other states from paying a larger share of the cost of the expanded Medicaid program. Medicaid expansion will provide coverage for more low-income Nebraskans and reduce the amount of uncompensated care that drives up costs for everyone with health insurance.

It's time to cut the spin and have an honest conversation about strengthening Medicare for today's seniors and future generations. Without the benefits of Medicare, millions of disabled and older Americans would not have affordable, accessible health care that covers their basic needs.