Why Social Security and Medicare Are Vital to Older Americans in Arkansas

Social Security and Medicare provide income and health security to older Americans aged 65 and older. Growing debt burdens, dwindling pensions, and increasing health care costs make these programs more important than ever. Here’s what they do for Arkansas.

Social Security in Arkansas

Older Arkansans count on Social Security benefits earned through a lifetime of work
- A total of 93 percent, or 410,353, of older Arkansas residents received Social Security in 2012. The average annual benefit was $14,100.
- Social Security accounted for 65 percent of the typical older Arkansan’s family income.
- Low- and middle-income older adults in Arkansas are even more reliant on Social Security’s earned benefit, typically receiving 95 percent of their family income from Social Security.

Social Security keeps middle-income older Arkansans from falling into poverty
- Census data show about 12 percent, or 51,834, of older Arkansans living in poverty.
- Without Social Security income, an additional 43 percent of older Arkansans, or 187,264 people, would fall into poverty.

Social Security plays an important role in Arkansas’s economy
- Social Security provided $8.3 billion in benefits to all Arkansans and $5.7 billion in benefits to Arkansans aged 65 and older in 2012.

Medicare in Arkansas

Medicare provides guaranteed health coverage, but out-of-pocket costs are high
- On average, Arkansas’s Medicare beneficiaries spent an estimated $3,899 on out-of-pocket health care costs in 2012.
- In 2012, older Arkansas adults enrolled in Medicare spent, on average, an estimated 15 percent of their income on out-of-pocket health care costs.

Medicare provides peace of mind for older Arkansans
- Nearly 98 percent of older Arkansans were enrolled in Medicare in 2011.

Medicare plays an important role in Arkansas’s economy
- The Medicare program spent an estimated $3.4 billion on health care services for 424,791 older Arkansans in 2012.