Why Social Security and Medicare Are Vital to Older Americans in North Carolina

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 North Carolina.

Social Security in North Carolina

Older North Carolinians count on Social Security benefits earned through a lifetime of work
- A total of 92 percent, or 1,245,926, of older North Carolina residents received Social Security in 2012. The average annual benefit was $15,000.
- Social Security accounted for 58 percent of the typical older North Carolinian’s family income.
- Low- and middle-income older adults in North Carolina are even more reliant on Social Security’s earned benefit, typically receiving 87 percent of their family income from Social Security.

Social Security keeps middle-income older North Carolinians from falling into poverty
- Census data show about 10 percent, or 121,639, of older North Carolinians living in poverty.
- Without Social Security income, an additional 41 percent of older North Carolinians, or 497,943 people, would fall into poverty.

Social Security plays an important role in North Carolina’s economy
- Social Security provided $25.3 billion in benefits to all North Carolinians and $18.3 billion in benefits to North Carolinians aged 65 and older in 2012.

Medicare in North Carolina

Medicare provides guaranteed health coverage, but out-of-pocket costs are high
- On average, North Carolina’s Medicare beneficiaries spent an estimated $4,382 on out-of-pocket health care costs in 2012.
- In 2012, older North Carolina 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 North Carolinians
- Nearly 98 percent of older North Carolinians were enrolled in Medicare in 2011.

Medicare plays an important role in North Carolina’s economy
- The Medicare program spent an estimated $11.6 billion on health care services for 1,287,810 older North Carolinians in 2012.