Why Social Security and Medicare Are Vital to Older Americans in Rhode Island

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 Rhode Island.

Social Security in Rhode Island

Older Rhode Islanders count on Social Security benefits earned through a lifetime of work
- A total of 93 percent, or 147,745, of older Rhode Island residents received Social Security in 2012. The average annual benefit was $15,200.
- Social Security accounted for 54 percent of the typical older Rhode Islander’s family income.
- Low- and middle-income older adults in Rhode Island are even more reliant on Social Security’s earned benefit, typically receiving 81 percent of their family income from Social Security.

Social Security keeps middle-income older Rhode Islanders from falling into poverty
- Census data show about 8 percent, or 12,444, of older Rhode Islanders living in poverty.
- Without Social Security income, an additional 40 percent of older Rhode Islanders, or 59,654 people, would fall into poverty.

Social Security plays an important role in Rhode Island’s economy
- Social Security provided $2.9 billion in benefits to all Rhode Islanders and $2.2 billion in benefits to Rhode Islanders aged 65 and older in 2012.

Medicare in Rhode Island

Medicare provides guaranteed health coverage, but out-of-pocket costs are high
- On average, Rhode Island’s Medicare beneficiaries spent an estimated $4,554 on out-of-pocket health care costs in 2012.
- In 2012, older Rhode Island adults enrolled in Medicare spent, on average, an estimated 13 percent of their income on out-of-pocket health care costs.

Medicare provides peace of mind for older Rhode Islanders
- Nearly 97 percent of older Rhode Islanders were enrolled in Medicare in 2011.

Medicare plays an important role in Rhode Island’s economy
- The Medicare program spent an estimated $1.5 billion on health care services for 155,581 older Rhode Islanders in 2012.