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

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 Wisconsin.

Social Security in Wisconsin

Older Wisconsinites count on Social Security benefits earned through a lifetime of work
- A total of 96 percent, or 789,938, of older Wisconsin residents received Social Security in 2012. The average annual benefit was $15,400.
- Social Security accounted for 52 percent of the typical older Wisconsinite’s family income.
- Low- and middle-income older adults in Wisconsin are even more reliant on Social Security’s earned benefit, typically receiving 76 percent of their family income from Social Security.

Social Security keeps middle-income older Wisconsinites from falling into poverty
- Census data show about 5 percent, or 41,701, of older Wisconsinites living in poverty.
- Without Social Security income, an additional 37 percent of older Wisconsinites, or 306,732 people, would fall into poverty.

Social Security plays an important role in Wisconsin’s economy
- Social Security provided $15.7 billion in benefits to all Wisconsinites and $11.9 billion in benefits to Wisconsinites aged 65 and older in 2012.

Medicare in Wisconsin

Medicare provides guaranteed health coverage, but out-of-pocket costs are high
- In 2012, older Wisconsin 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 Wisconsinites
- Nearly 98 percent of older Wisconsinites were enrolled in Medicare in 2011.

Medicare plays an important role in Wisconsin’s economy
- The Medicare program spent an estimated $7 billion on health care services for 814,058 older Wisconsinites in 2012.