



Biden Health Care Policies

PRO POINTS

- **The coronavirus pandemic has shaped Biden’s health policy agenda, pushing his previous pitches for building on Obamacare further left and elevating public health, long-term care and other issues neglected by past administrations.**
- **The centerpiece of Biden’s health plan is now a government-run public option that would auto-enroll millions of low-income people, including those in states that have not expanded Medicaid and those below 138 percent of the federal poverty line.**
- **Biden still opposes Medicare for All, which would virtually replace all private insurers with a single government plan, but has recently proposed “Medicare for more” — lowering the eligibility age from 65 to 60.**
- **Biden has also moved dramatically to the left on reproductive health since his time in the Senate, and now opposes the long-standing ban on federal funding for abortions.**


HOW WE GOT HERE

Throughout the Democratic primary, Biden positioned himself to the right of much of the field and criticized Medicare for All as too expensive and impossible to get through Congress. But after clinching the nomination, he set up so-called unity task forces with his former rival, independent Sen. Bernie Sanders, to craft policy ideas for the campaign and the Democratic Party platform. In April, he proposed to lower Medicare’s eligibility age from 65 to 60 — potentially extending government coverage to an additional 23 million people.

In the midst of a once-in-a-century pandemic and deepening economic crisis, he has also called for a number of sweeping steps to beef up Obamacare’s safety net, including making subsidies more generous, empowering Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices and automatically enrolling in a new, government-run public plan on Obamacare’s exchanges low-income people who lose their jobs or who live in states that haven’t expanded Medicaid.

Health care was already a major theme of the 2020 election, with Biden drawing sharp contrasts between his pledges to defend and restore the Affordable Care Act and President Donald Trump’s executive orders chipping away at the law and attempts to eliminate it entirely in the Supreme Court. But as the pandemic worsened and racial justice protests swept the nation, he has rolled out several other plans aimed at closing the country’s deep racial disparities, shoring up the crumbling public health system and overhauling long-term care for the elderly and people with disabilities.

Who would gain coverage if the Medicare eligibility age is lowered to 60

 = 500K newly eligible enrollees, by current source of coverage

Employer-based insurance: **13.4M**



Medicaid: **3.8M**



Individual market: **3.2M**



Uninsured: **1.7M**



Other public: **600K**



Source: Chris Sloan, Neil Rosacker and Ellyn Frohberg, “Nearly 23M Individuals May Be Eligible for Medicare Coverage Under Biden Proposal,” Avalere



And because the pandemic is likely to still be raging should he take office in January, he has also laid out plans to make testing free and accessible, hire at least 100,000 contact tracers, open a special enrollment period in the Obamacare exchanges, give direct aid to families forced to miss work due to the virus, restore ties to the World Health Organization that Trump severed this year and rapidly distribute a vaccine if and when one should emerge.

WHAT'S NEXT

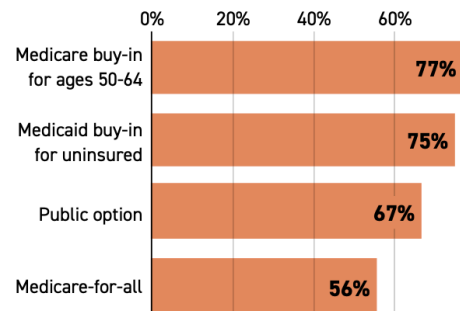
Biden and his advisers tell POLITICO that his top priorities if elected — aside from managing the pandemic — will be unwinding nearly all of Trump's executive actions on health care. That includes scrapping the rule allowing the broader sale of short-term insurance plans that offer bare-bones coverage, restoring federal funding to Planned Parenthood eliminated by Trump's Title X rule and reinvesting in Obamacare open enrollment outreach that the Trump administration cut back.

His team acknowledges that passing his signature public option proposal through Congress will be an uphill battle — all the health care industry groups that mobilized against Medicare for All during the primary also oppose a government-run plan because it would pay lower rates to providers and compete with private insurers on the exchanges. The Democratic-controlled House, for example, shied away from including the policy in the ACA expansion bill it passed earlier this year.

How much Biden will be able to accomplish on health care will heavily depend on the makeup of the House and Senate in 2021. Currently, Democrats are favored to take back the Senate and maintain control of the House, though a number of races are considered toss-ups.

Despite rise in support, other proposals continue to outpoll Medicare For All

Total share in favor, March 2020



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll

POWER PLAYERS



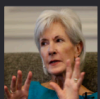
Ron Klain

Former chief of staff to Biden while he was vice president, appointed by President Barack Obama to serve as the administration's Ebola response coordinator in 2014 and now one of the Biden campaign's top health care advisers.



Vivek Murthy

Former Surgeon General under Obama who focused on public health, gun violence and addiction, now a health care adviser on the Biden campaign.



Kathleen Sebelius

Former governor of Kansas and Secretary of Health and Human Services under Obama during the passage and implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Now advising the Biden campaign.

Zeke Emanuel

The chair of the Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy at the University of Pennsylvania and a member of Biden's public health advisory committee. He has pushed for eliminating employer-sponsored insurance and shifting Medicaid from state to federal control.