



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on October 4, 2012

Obama Plans to Cut Medicare, Bob Woodward Says

President Barack Obama has been saying for months that Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney plans to slash Medicare spending, thereby denying senior citizens healthcare, but that Obama himself will save and strengthen it. According to journalist [Bob Woodward](#), however, Obama has admitted in private that he plans to cut the program by \$250 billion over 10 years; he just won't say so in public because that would be "bad politics."



Appearing on MSNBC's *Morning Joe Wednesday*, Woodward told host Joe Scarborough that Obama "is tuned in to his own ambivalence, and in the reporting on this [Medicare], it's very clear he realizes we face a problem that is not going to go away, that he's got to address."

Indeed we do face a whale of a problem. Medicare has unfunded liabilities topping \$100 trillion, and the program is expected to go into the red beginning in 2024. Significant cuts will have to be made. Yet the president, along with practically everyone else in Washington, has been acting as if there is no problem at all and criticizing those, such as Romney, who at least acknowledge the problem exists and offer some sort of proposal to address it.

But behind the scenes, said Woodward, Obama is planning to cut Medicare spending: "There are documents that are floating around that I got and notes of meetings ... where last year he was saying, 'Oh, yeah, we have to cut it \$250 billion over ten years.'"

"Wait," Scarborough interrupted. "So you've got a document where Barack Obama is saying we've got to cut Medicare \$250 billion, which I think is responsible. But his campaign team is going out there every day saying, 'Watch out. We're not going to cut Medicare, but Mitt Romney is.'"

Woodward replied: "Yeah, and, I mean, it's not just his campaign team. It's the president himself. He says, 'We're going to reform and strengthen Medicare for the long haul the right way by reducing the cost of health care — everyone would agree with that — not by shifting it onto seniors.' Well, in his own documents, he says, 'We have to do this.' When I talked to him, he realized and said very openly that it's irresponsible to not address this."

If Obama realizes something must be done about Medicare's spiraling costs, why, then, does he not say so now, and why does he pretend that acknowledging that reality is somehow taboo? An interview Woodward conducted with Obama in July 2011 may explain it. Asked about a meeting he had on Medicare with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Obama said:

All the Democrats felt that for Democrats to join with Republicans in anything that could be painted as a Medicare cut when there was a huge difference between Democratic and Republican positions on Medicare generally was bad politics. It's an untenable position to say we're not going to do anything on Medicare and Medicaid when that's one of the biggest drivers of our budget deficit.

In other words, while the president knows there is a problem with Medicare and even privately has



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plans to address it, he's using the threat of Republican cuts to the program as a political weapon. Those voting for Obama on the basis that he won't cut Medicare but Romney will may be in for a rude awakening if they are successful in reelecting him.

Now \$250 billion over 10 years is barely a drop in the ocean of red ink that Medicare is about to unleash, and undoubtedly these cuts are just reductions in planned increases, not actual cuts as people outside the Beltway would define them. Similarly, ObamaCare "cut" \$716 billion in future Medicare spending — money that Obama is turning around and [spending on other programs while pretending that he is saving money](#). Still, the fact remains that Obama is, in Washington terms, cutting Medicare and planning to cut it some more — all the while pretending that he is not and castigating Romney for suggesting that Medicare spending might have to be reined in soon. (Never mind that Romney has condemned the ObamaCare cuts and has not even fully endorsed his running mate's plan for reforming Medicare that still calls for spending hikes as far as the eye can see.)

None of this should come as a surprise. Obama by now is well known for saying one thing but doing another. [PolitiFact.com](#) found that he has kept just 37 percent of his 2008 campaign promises, so anyone counting on him to keep his seeming promise not to cut Medicare is taking a big risk. On the other hand, without seriously slashing the program — or, better yet, repealing it — the entire nation's fiscal health is at even greater risk. Not cutting Medicare is one promise Americans should hope Obama, if reelected, does not keep.

Photo: President Barack Obama, center, in the Rose Garden of the White House on Oct. 5, 2009, during a press event with doctors to discuss health care reform: AP Images



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