

Allow Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices, seniors say

In new poll, seniors say they'd cross party lines to support candidates who back Medicare drug price negotiation.

More than 70% of voters over age 65 say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who favors allowing Medicare to negotiate with drug corporations to lower prescription drug prices, including strong majorities across party lines, according to a new poll released by the Alliance for Retired Americans, a group for union retirees.

An 87% majority of voters over age 65 favor allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices, including 48% who are strongly in favor. Among Democratic seniors, 89% are in fa-

vor, as are 87% of Republican seniors and 81% of independent seniors. Voters over the age of 65 in rural areas (84%) favor the proposal with strong intensity as well. The poll was conducted by Lake Research Partners.

"The findings have major implications for both Democrats and Republicans in the 2022 mid-term elections," said Richard Fiesta, executive director of the Alliance for Retired Americans. "Americans pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, and they want lawmakers to take action now to lower the amount they pay at the pharmacy counter. This poll confirms that high drug prices are a top-of-mind issue for seniors when making

voting decisions."

Voters over the age of 65 are the most consistent voters, especially in mid-term elections. In both 2020 and 2018 more than a quarter of all votes cast were by people over the age of 65. In the 2018 midterm elections, 66% of all registered seniors turned out to vote, and in 2020 senior turnout was 74.5%, the highest percentages of any age group.

"The 2022 midterm electorate will have an outsized senior vote. This poll highlights a risk and an opportunity for elected officials and candidates," Fiesta said. "Even in today's polarized political environment, a significant percentage of senior voters of both parties would cross party lines

over this issue."

The poll found:

- If a Democratic candidate favored allowing Medicare to negotiate with prescription drug corporations to lower prescription drug prices, 51% of seniors would be more likely to vote for them, including 78% of Democrats, 35% of independents, and 31% of Republicans. Half of Republicans (51%) say it would make no difference in their vote, and 9% say they are unsure.
- Further, if a Democratic candidate opposed allowing Medicare to negotiate with prescription drug corporations to lower prescription drug prices, 55% of seniors would be less likely to vote for them, including a 60% majority of Democratic seniors, 53% of Republican seniors, and 49% of independent seniors.

A majority of senior voters support using the savings from Medicare drug price negotiation

to expand Medicare coverage to include hearing, dental, and vision benefits. Fifty-six percent of poll respondents said that savings from lower drug prices should be used to expand Medicare benefits, versus 15% who said it should be invested in public research into new treatments and cures and 9% who chose lowering Medicare's eligibility age to 60.

Across party lines, 86% of seniors have favorable views toward Medicare. However, just 46% say Medicare is doing an excellent or good job in dealing with prescription drug prices.

(Editor's Note: This article is from the Alliance for Retired Americans.)

SEIU Local 49 ratifies new master janitorial agreement

About 1,800 janitors have a new union master agreement that will raise wages \$2.25 an hour over the next three years, reaching \$18 an hour in year three. The agreement, ratified by members mid-August, is between Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 49 and a group of union-signatory janitorial contractors. They clean Class A office buildings in downtown Portland as well as the Nike, Adidas, and Intel campuses.

Maggie Long, director of the union's property services division, called it one of the strongest contracts ever. Besides the 14% wage increase over the life of the contract, the new pact includes better workload and immigration language, improvements in dental care, and for the first time commits employers to contribute to a new jointly administered education fund that will train members on green and energy-saving cleaning techniques.

The agreement runs through July 1, 2024. It covers the following union cleaning firms:

- Able
- ABM
- ISS at Adidas
- NJSI
- Relay Resources (formerly PHC)
- SBM
- ServiceMaster of Swan Island
- Skyline Building Maintenance
- State Building Maintenance
- Township United Building Services



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