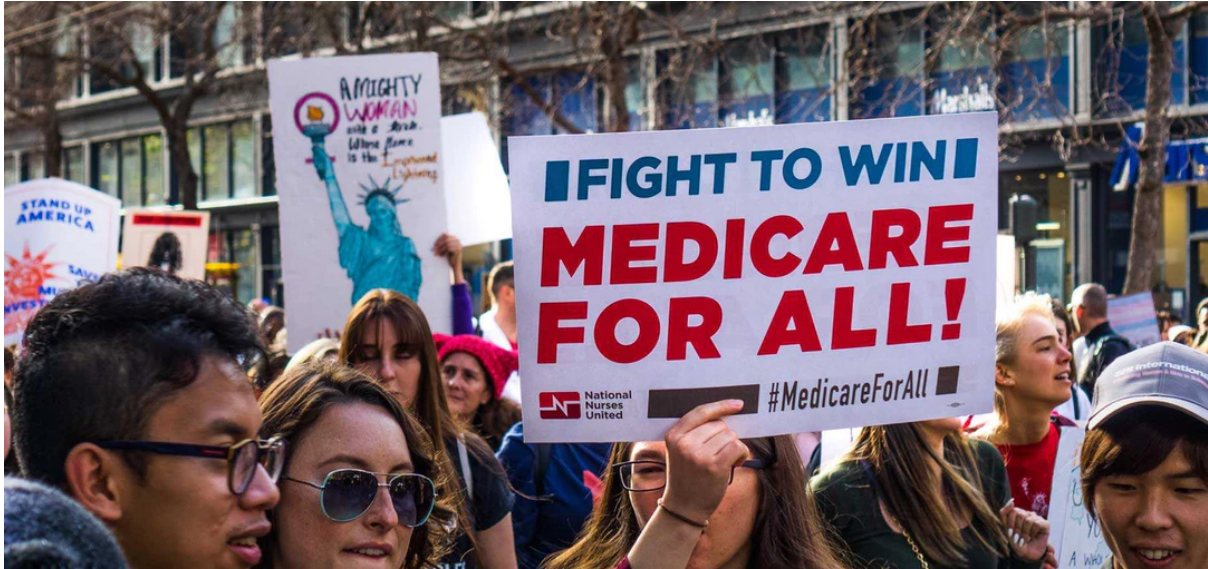


Understanding the Vulnerabilities of Single Payer



David Kendall

Senior Fellow for Health and Fiscal Policy

[@DavidBKendall](https://twitter.com/DavidBKendall)



Gabe Horwitz

Senior Vice President for the Economic Program

[@HorwitzGabe](https://twitter.com/HorwitzGabe)

Democrats are united in the dual goals of covering everyone and lowering their health care costs. The question, though, is how to achieve those goals.

Fortunately, there are plenty of good ideas. Many policymakers and organizations have proposed ways to tackle rising costs and ensure more people have affordable health insurance. One of those ideas, however aspirational, carries substantive and political risk: single payer. To help policymakers sort out how to handle health care, we list a series of analyses, polls, articles, editorials, and op-eds that show the vulnerabilities of single-payer.

Analyses

- Seven political and substantive risks of single payer. [Third Way memo](#) (May 4, 2019)
- The federal cost for single payer would be approximately \$32 trillion over 10 years. [Urban Institute](#) (May 9, 2016) [Mercatus Center](#) (July 30, 2018)

- Seven-of-ten households with private health care coverage would pay more under a fully-funded single payer plan than they currently pay for their own health plan.
Kenneth E. Thorpe, PhD (January 27, 2016)
- Single payer requires complex policy decisions.
Congressional Budget Office (May 1, 2019)
- “The Virtues and Vices of Single-Payer Health Care.”
Jonathan Oberlander, Ph.D., The New England Journal of Medicine (April 14, 2016)
- “Medicare for All's winners and losers: How payment rates would change for doctors.”
Caitlin Owens, Axios (July 3, 2019)

Polls

- Nearly 75% of Democrats incorrectly believe Medicare for All “lets anyone buy Medicare instead of their private insurance if they want to.”
Navigator (June 17, 2019)
- Only 13% of Americans want Medicare for All if it means the end of private insurance.
Matthew Sheffield, The Hill (February 7, 2019)
- Public support for single payer drops significantly once details are known.
Ashley Kirzinger, Cailey Muñana, and Mollyann Brodie, Kaiser Family Foundation (January 23, 2019)
- 31% of Americans support single payer when given four options.
Jocelyn Kiley, Pew Research Center (October 3, 2018)
- “Fact check: Americans aren’t clamoring for single-payer health insurance.”
Calvin Woodward and Emily Swanson, AP/Stat (September 17, 2018)

Articles, Editorials & Op-Eds

- "Medicare for All is a political loser."
Joe Lockhart, CNN (July 11, 2019)
- "The Most Critical Argument Democrats Will Have in 2020"
Ron Brownstein, The Atlantic (July 4, 2019)
- "How the Democrats Could Blow the Election Over Health Care"
Michael Tomasky, The Daily Beast (July 2, 2019)
- If Democratic "candidates pitch big, sweeping changes to the health care system without addressing voters' concerns about cost and access, their advantage won't necessarily hold up."
Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux, Vox (May 13, 2019)
- "Democrats, don't ditch the ACA for Medicare-for-all."
Former Senator Heidi Heitkamp, The Washington Post (May 8, 2019)
- "No matter what Sanders says, there's no Medicare-for-all without tradeoffs."
Editorial Board, The Washington Post (May 4, 2019)
- "Sorry, Bernie, but most Americans like their health insurance the way it is."
Megan McArdle, The Washington Post (May 3, 2019)
- Vermont failed to implement their single payer plan due to the risk of economic shock.
Amy Goldstein, The Washington Post (April 29, 2019)
- "Elevating the prospect of eliminating private health insurance altogether has some Democrats nervous."
David Catanese, US News & World Report (April 12, 2019)
- Fourteen things you may not know were in single payer.
Alice Miranda Ollstein and Joanne Kenen, Politico (April 10, 2019)

- “Don’t make health care a purity test: There are multiple ways to achieve universal coverage.”
Paul Krugman, *The New York Times* (March 21, 2019)
- “We don’t start from scratch.” Instead, we should expand the ACA and fill in the gaps in coverage.
President Barack Obama (March 19, 2019)
- “Stop the empty rhetoric and pursue attainable paths in the immediate interest of our patients’ lives and their pocketbooks.”
Professor Vin Gupta, *The Wall Street Journal* (March 7, 2019)
- “There’s no plausible route from here to there” on single payer.
David Brooks, *The New York Times* (March 4, 2019)
- “If Democrats back single-payer health care, it could assure Trump’s re-election.”
William Galston *The Wall Street Journal* (February 12, 2019)
- “We can figure out universal coverage without Medicare-for-all.”
Catherine Rampell, *The Washington Post* (February 4, 2019)
- “Medicare For All looks good in new poll, but there’s a big asterisk—some of the most popular counter-arguments make voters skittish.”
Jonathan Cohn, *HuffPost* (January 23, 2019)
- Single payer would require massive tax hikes.
Brian Riedel, *Vox* (August 7, 2018)
- “Democrats seize on cherry-picked claim that ‘Medicare-for-all’ would save \$2 trillion.”
Glenn Kessler, *The Washington Post* (August 7, 2018)
- “[S]ingle-payer is no policy panacea...[and] would require tax increases at politically suicidal levels.”
Former Congressman Henry Waxman, *The Washington Post* (April 8, 2018)

- “Democrats could eventually find themselves facing a Trumpcare-type debacle.”
Paul Krugman, *The New York Times* (September 15, 2017)
- “Maybe we should hit pause before we get on this bandwagon.”
Ron Pollack, *Vox* (September 14, 2017)
- “Single payer helps Republicans change the subject.”
Drew Altman, *Axios* (September 14, 2017)
- “Bernie Sanders’s ‘Medicare for All’ plan can’t work.”
Matthew Cooper, *Newsweek* (September 13, 2017)
- “A single-payer plan would be nice, in a world that looks nothing like the one we inhabit.”
Jonathan Chait, *New York Magazine* (September 13, 2017)
- “Single payer is one way to get there. It’s how Britain and Canada do it. But there are other ways.”
Michael Tomasky, *The New York Times* (August 14, 2017)
- “Medicare-for-All isn’t the solution for universal health care.”
Joshua Holland, *The Nation* (August 2, 2017)