Panel: “France and United States as Works in Progress”

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Title: “The Politics Over Medicare”
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Aaron Ostermeyer is a History major and has served as a Student Success Coach in the Mastodon Advising Center in Kettler Hall since the school year began. In this position he helps fellow students with varying issues such as test anxiety, social support, and consulting probation students. He also helps students with finding the resources they may need across campus. During spring break he was chosen to be part of the IPFW Career Services Externship Program where he served as an extern with the Allen County Superior Court and shadowed Judge Wendy Davis. Recently, he was chosen to be part of the IPFW Student Life’s Orientation Assistant team over the summer where he will be assisting incoming students and their families in becoming more familiar with our campus.

Abstract

This research paper examines the politics behind the passage of Medicare during the Lyndon Johnson administration. It begins by providing background information on what the state of healthcare for the elderly was like before the passage of Medicare in 1964. This, and other reasons, prompted President Johnson to act. Finally a brief synopsis of how Medicare worked at its introduction is included.

An extensive list of sources were used in the completion of this research paper, including scholarly books, a peer reviewed article, historical Newsweek articles and speeches by Presidents Truman, Johnson, and Reagan. A comprehensive comparison between the Republican and Democratic parties on Medicare is provided by examining vote tallies from Congress and political party platforms. Public opinion polls provided by Gallup from the early through the mid-1960s show, at the very least, a plurality of Americans consistently agreed with the idea of raising the Social Security tax in order to pay for medical insurance for the elderly. Moreover, in line with President Johnson’s focus on Civil Rights, Medicare proved instrumental in helping to eliminate racial segregation in hospitals and other healthcare facilities across the United States.

My research concludes that Medicare is neither a failed social program nor is it as fiscally insolvent as its critics make it out to be. Yet, short and long term changes to Medicare will likely be considered in the future. Some of these changes could include revising cost sharing to improve the benefit package, expanding low-income protections, and smartly targeted revenue increased such as on alcohol and tobacco. There is a reason Medicare has survived for over 50 years and as long as some smart changes are implemented, I see a bright future for Medicare in the United States.
Bibliographical Note

A. Primary Sources

The primary sources seen below were especially useful in conducting my research. The old *Newsweek* articles gave me insight into what political life was like in the United States with the coming of Medicare. The live album by Ronald Reagan allowed me to see how the campaign against Medicare was waged. The vote tallies accessed through the Social Security Administration proved useful in comparing the two main political parties when voting on the passage of Medicare itself. Likewise, *Gallup* Polls and national party platforms also proved useful in comparing the differing attitude toward Medicare by the two main political parties.


B. Secondary Sources

The secondary sources seen below were especially helpful in conducting my research. The Larry DeWitt article over Operation Coffee Cup gave me more insight into the actual campaign against Medicare. The online article over the use of Title VI and Medicare was helpful in that the enactment of Medicare had unforeseen benefits.