New Data Highlights Potential of SAVR at Medicaid to Engage 1.1 to 3.1 Million Eligible Voters

Institute *for* **Responsive Government**

Seven states and DC have the opportunity to engage millions more eligible American voters in our democratic process by implementing secure automatic voter registration (SAVR) when an individual applies for Medicaid. According to new data compiled by the Institute for Responsive Government, anywhere from 1.1 to 3.1 million additional eligible voters could be reached through SAVR at Medicaid offices.

The policy framework is in place and ready to go across states. Now, state officials are hopeful that the Biden Administration and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will provide guidance that would make it easier to implement SAVR at Medicaid as quickly as possible. The data paints a compelling picture for why:

SAVR Required States	Est. Unregistered but Eligible Population	Est. Eligible Medicaid Beneficiaries	Methodology A (85% of Eligible Unregistered Pop)	Methodology B (20.4% of Eligible Medicaid Beneficiaries)
CO	504,440	881,687	428,774	179,864
DC	75,915	165,102	64,527	33,681
MA	738,875	1,021,775	628,043	208,442
MI	916,071	1,802,179	778,660	367,644
MN	659,791	691,903	560,822	141,148
NV	323,223	456,261	274,739	93,077
NM	227,652	402,239	193,504	82,057
Sum	**3,445,967**	**5,421,146**	**3,100,069***	**1,105,913**

*This data is based on an estimate from Oregon's Secretary of State that SAVR would reach about 85% of the state's eligible unregistered population of voters, or about 171,000 Oregonians. That 171,000 figure is accounted for in the sum total of Methodology A above.

Why SAVR at Medicaid?

94 million people were underlined enrolled in either Medicaid or CHIP programs as of March 2023, and millions of Americans all across the country apply for Medicaid each month, according to data from the Kaiser Family Foundation. The National Voter Registration Act requires state Medicaid offices to offer applicants the opportunity to register to vote, but **Medicaid enrollees remain disproportionately underrepresented on voter rolls.** Government paperwork can be clunky and confusing — one of the reasons Medicaid enrollment remains negatively correlated with voter registration.

That's where SAVR comes in — the gold standard in voter registration transfers the burden of affirming voter eligibility from an individual onto the government. **Rather than having to opt-in during the lengthy Medicaid application process, eligible voters are automatically enrolled and receive a letter in the mail afterwards offering them the ability to opt-out.**

Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, and the District of Columbia all passed laws calling for SAVR at Medicaid. Calls from governors, policymakers, and advocates are growing by the day — urging the Biden Administration to make good on its commitment to a strong democracy and asking for CMS to issue guidance without further delay.

Oregon's Roadmap for SAVR Success

Implementing SAVR at Medicaid could help some states engage **nearly all remaining eligible but unregistered voters.** Data provided by Oregon's Secretary of State, for example, demonstrates that SAVR could reach an additional 171,000 eligible but unregistered voters — or about 85% of the remaining eligible but unregistered population. At least 25% of those potential eligible voters are people of color, roughly doubling the representation of people of color on the existing voter rolls. It also will allow the state to engage additional historically underrepresented communities including voters with disabilities and low-income voters.

What's Next?

Time is running out for the Biden Administration and CMS to be helpful to states looking to implement. SAVR at Medicaid is a proven and research-backed method for increasing efficiency across the government, boosting the accuracy of voter rolls, lowering costs for agencies, and — most importantly of all — engaging more eligible voters to participate in our democratic processes.

Methodology

The figures in this fact sheet (1.1 to 3.1 million additional eligible voters) reflect a completion of one full cycle of Medicaid enrollment in each state after they've fully implemented SAVR. That means we would start to see increased engagement of eligible voters in as little as one year following SAVR implementation at Medicaid offices.

The Responsive Gov team identified this range of potential eligible voters reached using two different methodologies:

Methodology A: The 3.1 million figure is based on Oregon's estimate that Medicaid AVR would reach ~85% of the eligible-but-unregistered population in the state. To determine the eligible-but-unregistered population in each state, we either used the TargetSmart database or official estimates provided by the state.

Methodology B: The 1.2 million estimate is based on the fact that roughly 20.4% of adult Medicaid enrolled citizens in Oregon were not registered to vote at the time the Oregon secretary of state ran the data match. We then applied that 20.4% to our estimates of each of the other six state's adult citizen Medicaid populations. This is a much more conservative methodology because Oregon's 20.4% unregistered rate among eligible Medicaid enrollees is likely much lower than other states, since the state has had SAVR at the DMV since 2015.

Context and challenges to keep in mind when looking at this data include:

- Medicaid data privacy rules prevent public access of individualized enrollment data, and

- Commercial data for low-income or more transient Americans is limited and inaccurate.