Thankfully, Senate Democrats did not advance the budget and President Obama made it clear he would veto it.

Whether the issue is academic achievement, pay equity or employment rates, troubling gaps remain between Whites and minorities inAmerica. Life expectancy is no exception. While the gap has been narrowing, some of the latest research shows the life expectancy for African American men is 70.8 years, which is nearly 4 years less than that of non-Hispanic White men who can expect to live to 76.2 years of age.

For Black women, average life expectancy stands at 77.5 years compared to 81.2 years for White women. It doesn't take much to see the implication of raising the eligibility age to receive Medicare or full benefits for Social Security.

If the age is raised to 70, an African American man might see several months worth of benefits at most while the average White woman would collect more than 11 years worth of benefits. This is fundamentally unfair and I staunchly oppose any attempt to raise the eligibility age for either program. It's likely however that this bad idea will resurface, promoted by extremists who describe it as reasonable. One of the strongest advocates for this change could be a heartbeat away from the presidency if Gov. Mitt Romney prevails in the presidential race next month.

Congressman Paul Ryan is Romney's running mate. He authored a budget that was passed by House Republicans this year and it attacks vital safety programs that will affect our seniors in a profound way. A new report by the Democratic staff of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce details the impact on residents of the 11th Congressional District.

The Ryan budget, which I opposed, would:

- Increase prescription drug costs for **7,100 Medicare beneficiaries** in the district who enter the Part D donut hole, forcing them to pay an extra $65 million for drugs over the next decade.
- Eliminate new preventive care benefits for **97,000 Medicare beneficiaries** in the district.
- Force **97,000 Medicare beneficiaries** in the district who are currently enrolled in traditional Medicare to pay thousands of dollars more in premiums to remain in traditional Medicare after Medicare becomes a voucher program.
- Reduce coverage for **16,900 Medicare beneficiaries** who rely on Medicaid to supplement their Medicare coverage, potentially denying them over $590 million in health benefits.
- Jeopardize nursing home care for **2,900 district residents** whose expenses are paid by Medicaid.
- Raise food costs for **15,800 district households with seniors** who rely on food stamps by as much as $1,100 per year or eliminate food assistance for many of these households entirely.
- Threaten affordable housing programs that provide rental support for **3,600 district households with seniors**

Higher premiums, end Medicare as we know it. The Ryan budget changes Medicare into a voucher program. It provides seniors with a voucher to buy insurance on the private market or to buy back into traditional Medicare. Analysts have indicated that private insurance companies would likely "cherry pick" the healthiest patients, leaving seniors with the greatest health needs in the traditional Medicare program. This would skew the "risk pool" of the traditional Medicare program, forcing seniors who want to stay in traditional Medicare after 2022 to pay additional costs. There are 97,000 seniors in the district who are currently enrolled in traditional Medicare. The costs for seniors who want to remain in traditional Medicare would increase $29,000 per senior over the senior's lifetime.

Cuts to Medicaid. The Ryan budget proposes to cut federal spending on Medicaid, which

provides health care coverage for 165,000 district residents, by over $800 billion over the next ten years. Under the Ryan budget, federal spending on Medicaid in 2022 would be cut in half. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, this would mean that states “could reduce the size of their Medicaid programs by cutting payment rates for doctors, hospitals, or nursing homes; reducing the scope of benefits covered or limiting eligibility.”

Forcing these cuts on states would have a significant impact on seniors.

Thankfully, Senate Democrats did not advance the budget and President Obama made it clear he would veto it. I will continue to be a voice for our seniors and work to strengthen Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. What happens in 2013 however, will depend on what happens at the polls in November. Please be sure to make your voice heard and vote!