Removal of the “Affordable Care Act & Medicare” webpage and corresponding links from the Medicare website

Access Assessment Report
May 15, 2018

Sunlight Foundation’s Web Integrity Project
webintegrity@sunlightfoundation.com

Report writer: Rachel Bergman
Comprehensive reviewer: Toly Rinberg
Content reviewer: Jon Campbell
See WIP's Report Production Protocol for details of our review process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Changed in this report?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Altering or removing text and non-text content</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Altering or removing links</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Moving an entire webpage or collection of webpages or establishing redirects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Altering or removing an entire pertinent section of a webpage or collection of webpages</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Removing an entire webpage or document</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Overhauling or removing an entire website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Altering or removing search engines and open data platforms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Altering, removing, or deleting datasets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Sunlight Foundation’s Web Integrity Project does not intend to assess any government agency’s intentions in presenting the changes to webpages or other Web content that appear in this report.

The format of this report and the methodology used to generate it are based on those developed during 2017 by the Environmental Data & Governance Initiative’s Website Monitoring Team, which our co-founders helped lead.
Removal of the “Affordable Care Act & Medicare” webpage and corresponding links from the Medicare website

Overview
In December 2017, a page titled “The Affordable Care Act & Medicare” was removed from the Medicare website. A link that led to this page and descriptive text about the Affordable Care Act were also removed from the website’s “About Us” page. Content on the removed page included information and links related to Medicare coverage being protected under the health care law, preventive services covered under Medicare, discounts on brand-name prescription drugs, and initiatives that support care coordination between providers. The page previously linked to healthcare.gov, which is the federal health insurance marketplace, and to another webpage on the Medicare domain called “Medicare & the Marketplace,” which is no longer linked from the “About Us” portion of the Medicare website.

Background
Agency details: Medicare is a federal health insurance program run by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The insurance program has been administered since 1966, and provides coverage for over 55 million people. According to the Medicare website, Medicare is for people who are 65 or older, younger people with disabilities, and people with end-stage renal disease.
Communications about changes: The office has not proactively communicated about or explained the changes described within this report.
Known archives: A public Web archive for the medicare.gov domain, collected by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), can be found at https://wayback.archive-it.org/2650/*/https://www.medicare.gov. The Medicare website links to these archives in the footer of webpages throughout the domain.

Description of Most Notable Changes
   a. The page contained information, and several links to other informational pages throughout the Medicare domain, about how Medicare coverage relates to the Health Insurance Marketplace created by the Affordable Care Act.
   b. The URL for this page currently leads to an “Error: Page Not Found” notice (January 8, 2018).
2. A link on Medicare’s “About Us” page (Webpage 1) which led to the removed “The Affordable Care Act & Medicare” page, was removed along with descriptive text about

1The January 8, 2018 archived version of this removed page, cited throughout this report, displays an “Access Denied” notice.
how the Affordable Care Act (ACA) affects people covered by Medicare (Compare versions from December 18 and December 25, 2017).

3. The removed “The Affordable Care Act & Medicare” page had a link to the “Medicare & the Marketplace” page, which has information about how Medicare relates to the Marketplace created by the ACA. The “Medicare & the Marketplace” page is no longer linked from the “About Us” portion of the Medicare website (Webpage 3).

4. Links and references to “The Affordable Care Act & Medicare” page were removed from the “Medicare & the Marketplace” page, including from the descriptive text, the sidebar, and the breadcrumb trail² (compare versions from December 18, 2017 and January 1, 2018).

² Note: Wikipedia defines the breadcrumb trail as the part of a webpage that “tracks and displays each page viewed by a visitor of a website, either in the order the pages were viewed, or in other definitions, displaying a hierarchy of the current page in relation to the website's structure. Breadcrumbs are typically placed in horizontal form under the masthead or navigation of a website.”
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report Section</th>
<th>Webpage Title</th>
<th>URL</th>
<th>Page Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Webpage 1</strong></td>
<td>About Us</td>
<td><a href="http://www.medicare.gov/about-us/about-medicare.html">www.medicare.gov/about-us/about-medicare.html</a></td>
<td>Live, altered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Detailed Description of Changes in Access and Content

Note: Throughout the entire report, links to the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine’s (IAWM) versions of corresponding pages are provided for reference. IAWM displays time in GMT. WIP’s website monitoring software is used to find narrower time windows for changes as much as possible. In those instances, the IAWM version of the corresponding page from the nearest date is provided.

Webpage 1: About Us

- URL: www.medicare.gov/about-us/about-medicare.html
- Changes occurred between December 11, 2017 and April 16, 2018. Note: The large date range is because this page was changed multiple times throughout this period, not all at once. See Table 1 below for dates of specific changes.
- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Archive: a previous version of this page from December 11, 2017 is available in the archive.

Webpage 1 Details:

Changes to content on the “About Us” page

1. The following content was changed between December 11, 2017 and December 16, 2017 (nearest IAWM version from December 18, 2017) (Screenshot not shown)

2. The following content was changed between December 18, 2017 and December 22, 2017 (nearest IAWM version from December 25, 2017) (Screenshot 1.1):
      i. Removed descriptive text below this link: “Learn about how the health care law (Affordable Care Act or ACA) affects people with Medicare. If you have Medicare, you don't need to change to a Marketplace plan, and you get more preventive services without paying the Medicare Part B coinsurance or deductible. You can save money on brand name drugs (Medicare Part D), and your doctor may get more resources to support care coordination. You can also be assured that Medicare funding will be available to help you save on premiums and coinsurance.”
   b. Altered link text from “Nondiscrimination” to “Accessibility & Nondiscrimination.”
      i. Altered descriptive text below this link from: “Learn about the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ (CMS) nondiscrimination policy, and how
to file a complaint if you believe you've been subjected to discrimination in a CMS program or activity."

To: “Learn about the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ (CMS) accessibility and nondiscrimination policies, and how to file a complaint if you believe you've been subjected to discrimination in a CMS program or activity. CMS programs, benefits, services, facilities, information, and technology meet Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.”

3. The following content was changed between February 5, 2018 and February 8, 2018 (IAWM version from February 12, 2018) (Screenshot not shown; compare Screenshots 1.1 and 1.2).

a. Altered descriptive text below the link for “Plain writing” from: “CMS’ progress in Plain Writing Act compliance.”

To: “Information about CMS’s efforts to write content so you can understand.”

4. The following content was changed between April 11, 2018 (nearest IAWM version from April 9, 2018) and April 16, 2018 (Screenshot 1.2):


i. Added descriptive text below this link: “Get involved with Medicare to help us define, design, and deliver care. Join a Technical Expert Panel, comment on proposed rules, and follow Medicare news.”

Changes in access to content linked from the “About Us” page

5. Access to information linked from Medicare’s “About Us” page was changed between December 18, 2017 and April 16, 2018. See Table 1 below for full assessment of access to pages corresponding to link on the “About Us” page.

Table 1: Links listed on the “About Us” page and corresponding status of linked pages.
The following table details the links that appeared on the “About Us” page between December 18, 2017 and April 16, 2018 (including their text and URLs) in both the main body of the text and the sidebar. It indicates the date range any links were removed, added, or altered; the status of their corresponding URLs and webpages; and the date range in which any corresponding webpages were removed or content on those pages was changed. It also notes if content that was on the removed pages can be found on other pages on the Medicare website. When WIP’s website monitoring software is able to provide a narrower time window for the change, IAWM versions are linked in parentheticals below.

Note: This report does not detail changes to content on all pages listed in this table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Link Text</th>
<th>Link URL</th>
<th>Is link removed, added, altered, or unchanged?</th>
<th>Link change/addition date range</th>
<th>Page status</th>
<th>Is content elsewhere on Medicare site?</th>
<th>Page change or removal date range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Contact Medicare</td>
<td><a href="https://www.medicare.gov/forms-help-and-resources/contact/contact-medicare.html">https://www.medicare.gov/forms-help-and-resources/contact/contact-medicare.html</a></td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Live, altered</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3/12/18-3/24/18 (see 3/26/18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Screenshot 1.1: A side-by-side of the “About Us” page on December 16, 2017 and December 22, 2017 showing all text and links removed and added between these dates. Red highlights indicate removed content and green highlights indicate added content. See the previous version of the page from December 18, 2017 and the updated version from December 25, 2017 on the IAWM.
**Screenshot 1.2:** The “About Us” page, showing all text and links removed and added between April 11, 2018 and April 18, 2018. Red highlights indicate removed content and green highlights indicate added content. See the previous version of the page from April 9, 2018 and the updated version from April 16, 2018 on the IAWM.

**Before: April 11, 2018**

**After: April 18, 2018**
Webpage 2: The Affordable Care Act & Medicare

- Page was removed between December 18, 2017 and December 24, 2017 according to a combination of WIP’s monitoring software and IAWM.
  - See IAWM snapshot of previous version from December 18, 2017 and removed page from January 8, 2018.
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Archive: previous version of this page from December 18, 2017 is available in the archive.

Webpage 2 Details:
Removed content and changes in access to content linked from the “The Affordable Care Act & Medicare” page

1. The “The Affordable Care Act & Medicare” page was removed between December 18, 2017 and December 24, 2017.
3. A link corresponding to this page was previously listed on Medicare’s “About Us” page (Table 1, Webpage 1).
4. The page listed the “Top 5 things to know about the health care law if you have Medicare” (Screenshot 2.1). This included the following text:

   “1. Your Medicare coverage is protected.
   Medicare isn’t part of the Health Insurance Marketplace established by the health care law, so you don't have to replace your Medicare coverage with Marketplace coverage. No matter how you get Medicare, whether through Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage Plan, you'll still have the same benefits and security you have now.

   You don’t need to do anything with the Marketplace during Open Enrollment.

   2. You get more preventive services, for less. Medicare now covers certain preventive services, like mammograms or colonoscopies, without charging you for the Part B coinsurance or deductible. You also can get a free yearly "Wellness" visit.

   3. You can save money on brand-name drugs. If you’re in the donut hole, you'll also get a 60% discount (65% in 2018) when buying Part D-covered brand-name prescription drugs. The discount is applied automatically at the counter of your pharmacy—you don’t have to do anything to get it. The donut hole will be closed completely by 2020.
4. **Your doctor gets more support.** With new initiatives to support care coordination, your doctor may get additional resources to make sure that your treatments are consistent.

5. **The health care law ensures the protection of Medicare for years to come.** The life of the Medicare Trust fund will be extended to at least 2029—a 12-year extension due to reductions in waste, fraud and abuse, and Medicare costs, which will provide you with future savings on your premiums and coinsurance.”

5. All of the links found above in the “Top 5 things to know about the health care law if you have Medicare” currently lead to live pages.

6. The page contained a section titled “Related Resources” that contained the URL for HealthCare.gov, the website for the federal health insurance marketplace.

7. The page included interactive elements titled “Find someone to talk to” and “Is your test, item, or service covered?”
Screenshot 2.1: The December 18, 2017 version of the “Affordable Care Act & Medicare” page from the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine.

The Affordable Care Act & Medicare

Top 5 things to know about the health care law if you have Medicare:

1. Your Medicare coverage is protected.
   Medicare isn’t part of the Health Insurance Marketplace established by the health care law, so you don’t have to replace your Medicare coverage with Marketplace coverage. No matter how you get Medicare, whether through Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage Plan, you’ll still have the same benefits and security you have now.
   You don’t need to do anything with the Marketplace during Open Enrollment.

2. You get more preventive services, for less.
   Medicare now covers certain preventive services, like mammograms or colonoscopies, without charging you for the Part B coinsurance or deductible. You also can get a free yearly “Wellness” visit.

3. You can save money on brand-name drugs. If you’re in the donut hole, you’ll also get a 60% discount (65% in 2018) when buying Part D-covered brand-name prescription drugs. The discount is applied automatically at the counter of your pharmacy—you don’t have to do anything to get it. The donut hole will be closed completely by 2020.

4. Your doctor gets more support. With new initiatives to support care coordination, your doctor may get additional resources to make sure that your treatments are consistent.

5. The health care law ensures the protection of Medicare for years to come. The life of the Medicare Trust Fund will be extended to at least 2029—a 12-year extension due to reductions in waste, fraud and abuse, and Medicare costs, which will provide you with future savings on your premiums and coinsurance.
Webpage 3: Medicare & the Marketplace

- Changes occurred between December 20, 2017 and January 1, 2018 according to a combination of WIP’s monitoring software and IAWM.
  - See IAWM snapshot of previous version from December 18, 2017 and current version from January 1, 2018
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Archive: previous version of this page from December 18, 2017 is available in the archive.
- This page is no longer linked from anywhere on the “medicare.gov/about-us/” subdomain.

Webpage 3 Details:

Changes to content on the “Medicare & the Marketplace” page

1. The following content on Medicare’s “About Us” page was changed between December 20, 2017 and January 1, 2018:
   a. **Removed** breadcrumb path “→ The Affordable Care Act & Medicare”
      i. The page’s breadcrumb trail previously displayed as “Home → About Us → The Affordable Care Act and Medicare,” which included links to Medicare’s “Home” and “About Us” pages (December 18, 2017).
      ii. The breadcrumb trail for this page is now displayed as “Home → About Us,” which included a link to Medicare’s “Home” page (January 1, 2018).
   b. **Altered** text box labelled “Note.” Updated date from “2016” to “2017” in the following sentences:
      i. **From** “Important tax information for 2016” to “Important tax information for 2017.”
      ii. **From** “If you had Medicare for all of 2016” to “If you had Medicare for all of 2017.”
   c. **Removed** text and link “Learn about the [5 ways the health care law affects people with Medicare.](https://www.medicare.gov/about-us/affordable-care-act/affordable-care-act.html) The link URL led to the “Affordable Care Act & Medicare” page, which is currently removed (Webpage 2).
   d. Changes to sidebar are the same as detailed in [Webpage 1](#) between December 20, 2017 and January 1, 2018.

---

3 **Note:** Wikipedia defines the breadcrumb trail as the part of a webpage that “tracks and displays each page viewed by a visitor of a website, either in the order the pages were viewed, or in other definitions, displaying a hierarchy of the current page in relation to the website’s structure. Breadcrumbs are typically placed in horizontal form under the masthead or navigation of a website.”
Note: Formatting of the sidebar on the “Medicare & the Marketplace” page was altered. The link “The Affordable Care Act & Medicare” was previously bolded and differentiated by a dark blue background, and now none of the links in the sidebar are differentiated in this way.

2. Unchanged content: The “Medicare & the Marketplace” page contains information for Medicare recipients on filling out income tax forms, the distinction between Medicare’s Open Enrollment and the Marketplace, whether having just Medicare Part A or Medicare Part B meets the health insurance requirement, and fraudulent activities with regards to the Marketplace. It also has a link with the text “What if I already have a Marketplace plan, and I will be 65 soon?”

Changes in access to the “Medicare & the Marketplace” page
3. The removed “The Affordable Care Act & Medicare” page (Webpage 2) previously contained a link leading to the “Medicare & the Marketplace” page.
4. The URL path of the “Medicare & the Marketplace” page currently includes “/about-us/affordable-care-act/.”
5. The removal of the “The Affordable Care Act & Medicare” page altered the page’s breadcrumb trail between December 26, 2017 and January 1, 2018 as noted above (Screenshot 3.1).
6. A link to this page is not listed on Medicare’s “About Us” page or any other page on the www.medicare.gov/about-us/ subdomain (see Table 1 and pages linked from the pages listed in Table 1).
7. This page can still be accessed through Google searches that include “Medicare and the Marketplace” and “Medicare and the Affordable Care Act” (or “Medicare and the ACA”).
Screenshot 3.1: A side-by-side comparison of the “Medicare & the Marketplace” page, showing all text and links removed and added between December 20, 2017 and January 2, 2018. Red highlights indicate removed text and green highlights indicate added links. See the previous version of the page from December 18, 2017 and the updated version from January 1, 2018 on the IAWM.