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25th Anniversary of First Federal Entitlement Repeal

Saturday marked the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage and Repeal Act of 1989, the first time a major federal entitlement was repealed.

Victory seemed unobtainable for taxpayers until [senior citizens led a protest](#) in August of 1989 against Congressman Dan Rostenkowski (D-IL), chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, garnering media attention and energizing an anti-tax movement in Illinois and across the United States.

The most notable opponents of the original 1988 legislation were the droves of members of Chicago-based Taxpayers United of America (TUA), according to the organization's president, Jim Tobin.

“Some of our members went to voice their opposition to this catastrophic coverage mandate and the higher taxes imposed on them to pay for it, and Rostenkowski refused to meet with them,” said Tobin. “So around 250 seniors chased one of Washington’s most powerful and influential officials until he escaped into a waiting car – and it was all [caught on film](#) by local news stations and covered by newspapers and radio.”

The incident brought national press coverage to the growing number of senior citizens opposed to the legislation Ronald Reagan signed into law only a year prior, raising their taxes by forcing them to pay a supplemental premium.

The protests instigated by members of TUA jumpstarted the campaign to repeal the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act of 1988, which happened just four months later. Their activism foreshadowed the similarly outspoken Tea Party protests decades later.

“Twenty-five years on, the Rostenkowski Rout and the signing of the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage and Repeal Act of 1989 are important lessons for Americans,” said Tobin. “Not only is it possible to contest government edicts, but it is vital for taxpayers to hold bureaucrats accountable and challenge them when they overstep their bounds and threaten our economic and personal liberty with higher taxes and more laws.”