

Earlier today, the Social Security Administration made official what we've long expected: there will be [no Cost Of Living Adjustment for Social Security next year](#) . Each month's check in 2010 will be the same size it was in 2009. The reason for this is that the economic recession has caused prices for many consumer goods to fall. The laws governing Social Security do not allow the size of monthly checks to decrease, but they won't go up. The automatic COLA was instituted in 1975, and 2009 [is the first year](#) there isn't an increase.

Some people have argued that seniors are [making out like bandits](#) because they have the same money to buy cheaper goods. You and I know better than that. In the first place, millions of seniors' Medicare Part B premiums are paid out of Social Security, and those premiums are tied to health care costs which have risen faster than inflation for decades and continue to go up, and quickly, this year. Without a COLA to cover the difference, that increase in Medicare premiums would mean a smaller check every month. That's why [I voted last month](#) for a bill, the [Medicare Premium Fairness Act \(HR 3631\)](#) , to keep those Medicare premiums from going up.

For seniors and the disabled, the principle recipients of Social Security, health care costs make up a pretty big chunk of their monthly expenses. The Social Security COLA, however, wasn't set up to take that fact into consideration. It's [calculated](#) based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). The Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates the CPI-W based on the prices of a [broad swath of goods](#) , but these are the expenses of [younger people who are still working](#) . These people tend to be healthier than the people who are actually on Social Security, so increases in health care costs for seniors are not accurately reflected by the CPI-W. Most prices may be falling, but health care costs are expected [to rise 6.2 percent per year](#) .

That's why I introduced the [Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act of 2009 \(HR 2429\)](#) . The Bureau of Labor Statistics already calculates another Consumer Price Index that reflects the actual expenses faced by seniors, including their higher spending on health care. My bill would use that index to calculate the Social Security COLA so

that, when seniors' costs go up, Social Security keeps pace. I'm working with my colleagues now to address this problem. Social Security has been under attack since it was first created in 1935. One of the attacks has been to allow inflation to eat away at the monthly benefits. Those of us who seek to defend Social Security must continue to work to prevent this from happening. That's something I have dedicated myself to since I entered Congress, and I will continue this fight as long as the people of the 20th District of Texas keep me as their representative.

