



## **Health care assistants protest President's plan to cut Medicare**

Posted: Feb 7, 2008 06:34 PM EST

The National Association of Health Care Assistants is headquartered in Joplin, and Thursday members gathered to call attention to a plan to cut \$17 billion in Medicare nursing home benefits over the next five years.

NAHCA and the Coalition To Protect Senior Care say nursing homes and other agencies can not afford a cut when they have not even been getting cost of living increases.

Officials and workers say 70 percent of a facilities costs are for staffing, and the cuts could mean job losses.

They also say it could be a bigger problem in rural America.

"I do fear for my job because we are at a small facility, and you know, we're out in the middle of nowhere," says Natosha Baird, of Quaker Hill Nursing Home in Lowell, Kansas. "I mean, if they cut us back we may not have jobs. They may move 'em to bigger places. We'll all be out of a job and they'll be out of a home."

"It would make it more difficult for those facilities to recruit and retain staff with a lot of rural facilities," says NAHCA President and CAO Lisa Cantrell, RNC. "It's more expensive for rehab services, some medical supplies they need because it's not like St. Louis where everything is close in and accessible."

The White House projects that even with the cuts our federal deficit will soar to near record levels.