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Rural hospitals close
in increasing numbers

Activists protest cuts to Medicaid in 2025 in Washington, DC. Federal Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements are a critical revenue source for rural hospitals, which tend to serve large numbers of Medicaid patients.

FILE PHOTO BY TASOS KATOPODIS/GETTY IMAGES FOR PEOPLE'S ACTION INSTITUTE

Closures have domino effect on communities, residents

Shayann Ramedani
and Daniel R. George

Penn State
THE CONVERSATION

Some Pennsylvania hospitals are being pushed beyond the brink of closure.

Taylor Hospital in Ridley Park closed in April 2025, Crozer-Chester Medical Center in Upland closed in May 2025, and Heritage Valley Kennedy Hospital, formerly the Ohio Valley Hospital, in Kennedy Township closed in June 2025.

Rural hospitals are particularly vulnerable.

The UNC Sheps Center, which tracks rural hospital infrastructure in the United States, has documented 195 rural hospitals that have closed or converted to outpatient facilities since January 2005. Closures have far outpaced the opening of new rural hospitals during this period.

As a physician who has trained in rural communities and a researcher who studies community well-being and public health, we see that every rural hospital closure exerts a domino effect on surrounding communities and residents. This can be difficult to quantify but manifests as lost jobs and economic decline, poorer health and a pervasive sense of fraying community fabric.

Our 2022 study found that when a rural hospital closes, hospitals nearby see a measurable spike in inpatient admissions and emergency room visits that can cause significant financial strain. It's a phenomenon we called "the



A 2022 study found that when a rural hospital closes, hospitals nearby see a measurable spike in inpatient admissions and emergency room visits that can cause significant financial strain. GETTY IMAGES FILE PHOTO

bystander effect" of hospital closures.

Closures can sometimes feel random, but they are predictable consequences of the combination of health policy and market forces.

Spending cuts and Pennsylvania budget

Recent federal legislation has made the financial outlook for rural hospitals more precarious. The package of tax

breaks and spending cuts that President Donald Trump signed into law on July 4 reduced Medicaid eligibility for Americans and capped federal reimbursements to hospitals and other health care providers.

These reimbursements are a critical revenue source for rural hospitals, which tend to serve large numbers of Medicaid patients.

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ANALYSIS

Critics are skeptical
Trump will
release tax
returns

IRS audits ending, so
what's his excuse now?

Josh Meyer
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump's long-lasting explanation for not releasing his tax returns was updated on May 19 when acting Attorney General Todd Blanche issued a Justice Department document that effectively shut down any existing IRS audits, investigations and enforcement actions against Trump, his family and his sprawling business empire.

Since his 2016 campaign, Trump has declined to follow the tradition of U.S. presidents releasing tax returns, saying he couldn't do so because of ongoing IRS audits.

"I may even release my current returns," Trump told reporters May 20 when asked about the agreement between the president and his own administration.

Meghan Faulkner, communications director for the watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, called on Trump to release his taxes now that the audits have ended.

"Donald Trump has previously claimed that an ongoing audit prevented him from releasing his tax returns, and now that the IRS has agreed not to audit him, he is seemingly free to release them by his own standard," Faulkner told USA TODAY. "He absolutely should release his taxes, as every president except him has for the last 50 years."

But Trump has said he will release the returns before, and whether he actually will now is unclear.

White House, Trump Organization offer no comment

The White House told USA TODAY on May 21 that it had no comment on whether or when Trump might release past tax returns, while also disclosing exclusively that the president – and Vice President JD Vance – have not yet filed their 2025 tax returns.

"The president and vice president requested and received a 45-day extension in order to compile the necessary financial information and complete the report," a White House official said on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The White House referred USA TODAY to the president's statement to reporters about how he might release his "current returns," and to the Trump Organization, which oversees Trump's real estate empire and other businesses.

Alan Garten, the Trump Organization's executive vice president and chief legal officer, did not immediately return a request for comment.

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