

Medicare Maladies

A Series that Exposes the Dangerous Elements of the Medicare Bill currently in Committee

MM #18: How Much Is \$400 Billion?

It's 400,000 millions. Or 400 million thousands. Or 4 billion hundreds.

Anyway you count it, \$400 billion is huge.

It's also what taxpayers like you are likely to pay over the next 10 years if Congress and President Bush add prescription drugs to Medicare as an entitlement.

In fact, \$400 billion is a low estimate. Government experts believe it could be higher.

Four hundred billion dollars doesn't sound like much (for some). But, as a phrase attributed to the late Sen. Everett Dirksen goes, "a billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money."

Today's lawmakers aren't saying this. They regularly throw around billions when they write laws, but often don't know (or care) how much those laws will cost you, the taxpayer. So, as a service from The Heritage Foundation, here's what \$400 billion is:

- More than the 2002 gross domestic product (GDP) of Russia (\$350 billion) or Mexico (\$373 billion).
- About 10 times greater than what Microsoft founder Bill Gates is worth (\$35 billion).
- About 235 times what General Motors' net income was in 2002 (\$1.7 billion).

This isn't just "real money." It's your money. And a drug entitlement will take it away.

Read more of Heritage's Medicare research at heritage.org.

For more information or to receive an e-mail version of "Medicare Maladies," contact medicaremaladies@heritage.org or call Heritage Media Services at (202) 675-1761.

("Medicare Maladies" is a regular feature, launched 7/14/03, from The Heritage Foundation. Sad to say, there's another malady coming your way tomorrow. Daily "maladies" are also available on heritage.org.)