

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #23: Reforming Medicare Like It's 1999

Ah, 1999: The Senate acquitted President Clinton of impeachment charges ...“Y2K” loomed ...“Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace” appeared in theaters...

And adding prescription drugs to Medicare cost just \$60 billion.

That's a lot less than current attempts to add drugs to Medicare, Heritage Foundation health-care expert Derek Hunter writes in an Aug. 12 paper. In fact, Hunter notes that since 1999, almost every prescription drug proposal has been more costly than the one before.

Some of those proposals were:

The Breaux-Thomas Proposal. Sen. John Breaux, D-La., and Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Calif., offered a Medicare drug plan in 1999 that only would have covered low-income seniors. Estimated cost: \$60 billion.

The First Clinton Proposal. In 1999, Clinton proposed a prescription drug entitlement as part of a broader package of Medicare changes. Estimated cost: \$118 billion over 10 years.

The Second Bush Proposal. Earlier this year, President Bush proposed a universal Medicare prescription drug entitlement. His estimated cost: \$400 billion over 10 years.

Hunter adds that these costs barely begin to account for 77 million baby boomers, who will nearly double the number of Medicare patients when they retire.

Makes you wish it were 1999 again.

Read more about past drug plan costs and other 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.)