

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #28: Why Aren't The Rest of Us As Good As Congress?

That's the question recently asked by *Wall Street Journal* columnist Robert Bartley.

Curiously, members of Congress are on the verge of enacting a Medicare drug benefit that has already led the House of Representatives to enact legislation to exempt themselves and federal workers from it in their own retirement. Key senators are pushing similar legislation.

In an Aug. 18 column, Bartley notes that members of Congress have given themselves and their employees, as well as millions of federal workers, a superior system.

What Bartley's talking about is the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, or FEHBP. It's a system of competing health plans that covers 8.3 million federal employees and retirees, including members of Congress. It offers broad patient choice, low costs and prescription drugs to boot.

It's also backed by The Heritage Foundation as the best model for true Medicare reform. Heritage analysts say an FEHBP-like system would provide the seniors the prescription drug coverage politicians want, and the powerful forces of consumer choice and free-market competition would save the taxpayers' money over the long run.

To be fair, a House bill starts a transition to an FEHBP-like system in Medicare in 2010. But a mammoth 1,043-page Senate bill has nothing even close to FEHBP. It's a prescription for massive government micromanagement.

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.)