

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #40: A Nation Of Medicare, By Medicare, For Medicare

The purpose of our government is to “establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity,” according to the Constitution.

But if lawmakers don't make serious, market-based reforms to Medicare soon, government will have just one purpose in the future: Paying seniors' health-care needs.

Forget defending the nation's borders or maintaining highways. “Absent reform,” Comptroller General David M. Walker told the House Budget Committee in 2001, “sometime during the 2040s, government would do nothing but mail checks to the elderly and their health-care providers.”

As Heritage Foundation Robert Moffit has pointed out, Medicare's Hospital Insurance Trust Fund alone will have a deficit in 10 years. By 2026, Moffit says the fund will be exhausted as the number seniors on Medicare rises to between 60 and 70 million.

You don't have to be a financial genius to realize that Medicare needs to be updated to accommodate 77 million baby boomers who are preparing to retire. But lawmakers don't seem to understand this as they wrestle with adding prescription drugs as a Medicare entitlement.

Perhaps they're not clear on what *their* purpose in our government is.

Read more Heritage 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.)