

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #54: Want To Keep Medicare Solvent? Keep Working.

There's one way to keep Medicare funded as millions of baby boomers retire starting in 2011: Get people to work longer.

Thomas Saving, a Medicare trustee, briefly mentioned this possibility in a Heritage Foundation lecture published Sept. 24. "One of the important things about financing these programs is getting people to work longer," Saving said. "By working longer, we would increase revenue while reducing the burden placed upon the system."

But Saving knows many can't work longer: Many professions, such as police officer, have a mandatory retirement age because a 68-year-old cop can't handle the physical aspects of the job as well as a 29-year-old can. That means Medicare will force an even greater financial burden on those who could work longer, such as an accountant or attorney. And that means Medicare, without serious reform, could pit white-collar workers against blue-collar ones, baby boomer retirees versus Generations "X" and "Y" workers, plus rich versus poor.

Saving doesn't want this to happen. That's why he, along with Heritage health-care expert Robert Moffit, has been campaigning to reform Medicare before 77 million retiring baby boomers bust an already creaky system. Adding prescription drugs as an entitlement, as many lawmakers want to do, will only hasten that future. Real reform must come first.

Read more of Saving's lecture and 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.)