

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #60: OK, Class. Let's Review...

Eighteen research papers, 35 online memos, 12 essays and 60 Medicare Maladies.

That's how much Heritage Foundation experts have written so far this year on proposals pending before Congress that would add prescription drugs as a Medicare entitlement.

It's also a lot stuff to remember. So here's a review of where we stand on the issue:

Heritage thinks that, on the whole, both the House and the Senate proposals are lousy. By adding prescription drugs as a Medicare entitlement, without serious reform, these bills would 1) create the biggest expansion of government since the 1960s 2) cost so much that it would increase the deficit and kill future tax relief 3) burden the children and grandchildren of today's baby boomers with high taxes and 4) would result in about 4 million seniors who have good, employer-based drug coverage to lose it and enroll in an inferior government program.

It's best to scrap both bills and start again. But when lawmakers do that, they should keep a key provision of the House bill that calls for a FEHBP-style program for the baby boomers.

What's FEHBP? It's the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program. It's been around since 1960 and is available to all federal employees, retirees and their spouses. Even members of Congress use it. It offers patient choice and a variety of health plans, all of which have prescription drugs. It's available everywhere in the country, so there's no worrying about rural people having access to it.

And it's the best model for real Medicare reform. Read more about it 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.)