

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #67: What Americans Value The Most

OK, fellow Americans, what do we value the most?

Freedom? Good answer. We're in the "land of the free" after all. But besides that, according to Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., we value good health.

"At the end of the day, 'the health of my family' ... is probably the most important thing to most Americans if you had to prioritize," Kyl said in a lecture to The Heritage Foundation.

But Kyl added that there's another value: "We seem to have an attitude in this country that someone else should pay for our health care."

This is one of the biggest problems facing a Capitol Hill committee as they try to finish a compromise bill that would offer prescription drugs as a Medicare entitlement, Kyl said. On one end, you have liberals who want to make the drugs available to all Medicare patients, regardless of need, because that would be in the spirit of Medicare itself—a government program for all. On the other end, however, lie great real-life challenges, namely: The good chance that 4 million seniors who already have superior private drug coverage could lose it if the proposals become law; a Medicare system already bleeding deficits and needing more taxes to pay for it; and 77 million baby boomers getting ready to retire.

This may be the most important legislation Congress will address after national security matters, Kyl said in his Oct. 20 lecture. Let's hope lawmakers have their values right.

Read more about how to reform Medicare the right way 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.)