

# Medicare Maladies

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

## MM #7: Congress Added Drug Benefits Before (It Didn't Work)

If Yogi Berra followed the current Medicare debate on Capitol Hill, he would probably say: "It's déjà vu all over again."

The baseball legend known for his malapropisms isn't a Medicare expert. But Edmund Haislmaier is one for The Heritage Foundation and he's reached the same conclusion.

Haislmaier notes in a July 17 report that Congress offered a prescription drug benefit before in the 1988 Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act. But senior citizens, the law's intended beneficiaries, forced lawmakers to repeal it a year later.

Why? Retirees with prescription drug coverage from their former employers revolted. They calculated that under the 1988 drug program, they would pay more in premiums and receive less coverage than under their existing employer-sponsored coverage.

Fast forward to 2003: Once again, Congress is offering a prescription drug benefit. But the Congressional Budget Office says this "benefit" could force more than four million retirees to lose their private drug coverage. And, while the budget office didn't address "Medigap" coverage, Haislmaier says that drug coverage plan also would be a casualty under the Medicare bills. That's a recipe for another backlash, Haislmaier says. It's best to scrap the legislation and start again. "Such an approach would ... ensure that both today's retirees and tomorrow's retirees get the kind of quality, integrated, chronic care that they need and deserve," he writes.

Read Haislmaier's report here: [www.heritage.org/Research/HealthCare/bg1668es.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/HealthCare/bg1668es.cfm)

For more information or to receive an e-mail version of "Medicare Maladies," contact [medicaremaladies@heritage.org](mailto: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](http://heritage.org).)