

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #74: Trust, But Verify On Medicare, Mr. President.

One of Ronald Reagan's favorite proverbs was a Russian one he used when dealing with the Soviets: "Trust, but verify."

President Bush should keep that advice in mind about businesses as lawmakers work to complete a proposal that could offer prescription drugs to all 40 million Medicare patients. In an Oct. 29 speech, Bush said he met with a representative from Caterpillar that day who told him that "if there's a Medicare bill signed by me, corporations have no intention to what they call 'dump' retirees into a system they don't want to be dumped into."

That may be the case for corporations run by executives who will do the right thing no matter what happens to Medicare: They will continue to offer prescription drug coverage their employees earned over decades of service even if the government offers it, too.

But The Heritage Foundation is nobody's fool. We know there are some executives who will not do the right thing for their retirees. To protect them, we advocate, among other things, targeting prescription drug benefits in Medicare to those who need it (more than three out of four retirees already have a prescription drug benefit from their former employers). This way, retirees who need drugs can get them through Medicare. And businesses can be kept honest.

So, Mr. President, if you want to trust business with their prescription drug coverage, verify their claims. You might be surprised what you'll find and wait for a better Medicare bill.

Read about better ways to offer prescription drugs through Medicare 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.)