

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #85: Medicare Bill Not A Workhorse But An “Aardvark”

If you were a lawmaker involved with the 1,100-page Medicare prescription drug bill, you would hope pundits would use a good animal metaphor to describe it. “A proud lion of legislation,” for example. Perhaps a “thoroughbred” or even a “workhorse” of health policy.

But the proposal is more like an “aardvark”—and only because “camel” is too good for it, writes *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne Jr. in a Nov. 18 piece.

“It’s said that a camel is a horse designed by committee,” Dionne says. “But the camel metaphor doesn’t do justice to the Medicare prescription drug bill that came out of a House-Senate conference over the weekend. It is not a compromise but a weird combination of conflicting policy preferences. ... Nobody’s principles are served by this bill.”

“Amen!” say Heritage Foundation health-care experts Stuart Butler and Robert Moffit in a Nov. 17 online research paper. They write that it’s time for Congress and the president to go back to the drawing board with this proposal and do two things: 1) Congress should enact a limited measure, based on a prescription-drug discount card deal agreed to earlier by the conference. And 2) The president and lawmakers committed to reform must do what they failed to do effectively over the last two years—methodically build a case with the American people for critical reforms in the Great Society program. “Changes in sensitive programs like Medicare can only be achieved through a public campaign, not through backdoor deals,” they write.

Read more of Butler and Moffit’s paper 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.)