

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #86: Christmas Comes To Washington

It's more than a month away, but Christmas has arrived in Washington for special interest groups—in the form of the Medicare prescription drug bill.

“This bill is a Christmas tree, with all kinds of benefits to all kinds of groups,” Stuart Butler, The Heritage Foundation’s chief domestic policy expert, told *The Los Angeles Times* Nov. 18. Butler told the newspaper that the legislation, now making its way through Congress, was “a terrible package” in part because “there is nothing to control costs.”

And how. *The Times* reported that the bill has set off a feeding frenzy for the special interest groups that comprise the Medicare industrial complex. *The Hill*, a newspaper that covers Congress, says that about 400 groups have lined up on this bill alone.

But take note on how the bill is structured to meet the needs of Medicare patients. Of the \$400 billion taxpayers will spend on Medicare prescription drugs over the next 10 years, only 6 to 7 percent of that estimated amount will buy new drugs for seniors, according to a Nov. 17 research paper from the National Center for Policy Analysis, a Texas-based think tank. The rest is an income transfer from taxpayers that will replace existing drug spending by insurers and seniors.

Read more of the center’s paper at <http://www.ncpa.org/pub/ba/ba463/>.

Read about a better way 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.)