

# Medicare Maladies

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

## MM #89: Who Knows What The Medicare Bill Really Costs?

The chief numbers-crunchers in Congress don't, that's for sure.

The Congressional Budget Office sent a letter last week to congressional leaders informing them that the Medicare prescription-drug bill would cost taxpayers about \$395 billion from 2004 to 2013.

At least, that's what the agency *thinks* the cost is. Maybe.

"CBO has not had an opportunity to review the final legislative language, and this estimate could change upon completion of that review," the Nov. 20 letter said. "Also, the estimate does not include the act's potential effects on discretionary spending."

In other words, it doesn't have a clue what the bill really costs. That means a lot of House members don't either. Then again, they probably haven't absorbed the details of bill that's 681 pages long, three inches thick and reads like an owner's manual for the space shuttle.

Nevertheless, the House approved the Medicare bill 220-215 near dawn on Nov. 22, about 24 hours after the final legislative language was released. Not even speed-reading guru Evelyn Wood could have read through the bill before the vote was taken.

As the single biggest expansion of government in 40 years, the bill goes far beyond giving Medicare patients prescription-drug coverage with far-reaching consequences for generations to come. Lawmakers were content to vote blind.

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).)