

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #90: The Truth Is Out There

Now they tell us: The cost of the Medicare bill that President Bush will likely sign is higher than expected—about \$2 trillion in the second decade alone.

“Many lean on the estimate that the legislation will cost \$400 billion over the next 10 years,” *The Washington Post* wrote in a Nov. 25 editorial. “Yet the director of the Congressional Budget Office recently told members of Congress that in its second decade, the measure could cost between \$1.7 trillion and \$2 trillion.”

God forbid what life in the third decade will be like if real reforms in Medicare never materialize: 77 million aging baby boomers straining a Medicare program governed by sluggish bureaucrats and stupid red tape. People paying more in taxes for Medicare than for defense or Social Security. Companies dropping drug benefits promised to their retirees because they want to increase their profit margins.

But senators didn't seem to think about this as they voted 54-44 on Nov. 25 to approve the Medicare measure and send it to Bush. Why should they? Their kids will deal with it.

That's been the problem from Day One. Lawmakers never saw past the next election cycle when they wrote the universal drug entitlement. They should have looked at the next 20 or 30 years. Lawmakers literally passed the buck on Medicare and they don't care that it stops in the apartments and starter homes of their grown children or in the cribs of their grandchildren.

It's in their hands now. Let's hope they have the courage to do what their elders could not: Reform Medicare on the principles of choice, competition and serious cost containment. This ends “Medicare Maladies,” but not the Medicare debate. See more research at heritage.org.

(“Medicare Maladies” was launched 7/14/03 from The Heritage Foundation. Sad to say, there will not be another malady coming your way tomorrow. All 90 “maladies” are available on heritage.org.)