

Health Care Reform Legislation Could Hurt Seniors Copyright: Business Wire

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Administration and Congressional Leaders Understating Possible Consequences for Seniors

WASHINGTON--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Health care reform legislation could be worse for America's seniors than the Administration and Congressional leaders are publicly stating, according to The Senior Citizens League (TSCL), one of the nation's largest nonpartisan seniors advocacy organizations.

Among other concerns, The Senior Citizens League is focusing on two main objections to the current health care reform bill:

1. Shaky Medicare Financing: The bill will not shore up Medicare's financing, despite claims to the contrary; and
2. Reduced Access to Care: Seniors may have reduced access to medical care as providers experience cuts and go out of business.

1. Shaky Medicare Financing: Lawmakers supportive of the bill have consistently stated that health care reform would keep the Medicare trust fund in the black for several additional years. However, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) calls that claim into question, accusing the government of "double-counting."

In its December 23, 2009 memo, the CBO states that, "...the majority of the health insurance trust fund savings would be used to pay for other spending under the [health care bill] and would not enhance the ability of the government to redeem the bonds credited to the trust fund to pay for future Medicare benefits."

The CBO also points out that in order to pay future Medicare benefits, revenue "...will have to be generated from taxes, other government income, or government borrowing in that year." The CBO excludes a fourth possible option –benefits cuts paired with higher premiums and co-pays – which seniors have also endured in recent years.

2. Reduced Access to Care: According to a December 10, 2009 memo from the Chief Actuary of the government's Centers for Medicare & Medicaid services, "...providers for whom Medicare constitutes a substantive portion of their business could find it difficult to remain profitable, and, absent legislative intervention, might end their participation in the program (possibly jeopardizing access to care for beneficiaries)."

The memo further states that, "...roughly 20 percent of Part A providers would become unprofitable within a 10-year projection period."

"The current health care reform package could unintentionally make the problems of Medicare worse, while reducing access to medical care for seniors," said Shannon Benton, TSCL's executive director. "Although there are some positive things in the bill, such as the partial closing of the much-dreaded Medicare Part D doughnut hole, our read is that the bill is not as positive for seniors as its supporters have suggested."

The Senior Citizens League encourages its supporters to contact their lawmakers and express their concerns with the bill.

With 1.2 million supporters, The Senior Citizens League (www.SeniorsLeague.org) is one of the nation's largest nonpartisan seniors groups. The Senior Citizens League is a proud affiliate of The Retired Enlisted Association.

For The Senior Citizens League

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