

Congress Plans Medicare Expansion; Bush Vows To Veto Plan

A fierce battle is shaping up between Democrats and President George W. Bush and some Republicans over private Medicare plans (called Medicare Advantage plans) which Democrats charge are more costly than regular Medicare coverage and will lead to privatization of the Medicare program.

Bush is threatening to veto any legislation curbing the private Medicare plans, but the Democrats are trying to build a

paying private Medicare Advantage plans by siphoning funds from the Medicare Trust Fund."

"THIS HAS TO STOP," said the brochure message, which added, "Instead of increasing insurance company profits, we should be improving Medicare for low-income seniors and helping uninsured children."

According to published reports, the Democratic-sponsored House health care bill simplifies applications to relax strict limits on assets, which now block many low-income Medicare members from receiving added benefits, and prohibits private Medicare plans from charging higher co-payments than regular Medicare.

The House bill is being supported by the AARP and also the American Medical Association (AMA). The physicians' organization supports the bill because, among other reasons, it would prevent reductions in Medicare payments to doctors. Presently, Medicare payments to doctors are scheduled to be cut by 10 percent on Jan. 1, 2008 if Congress doesn't act.

The bill also expands Medicare coverage to include preventive services, such as certain disease-detection screenings.

It allows Medicare to pay primary care doctors to coordinate the care of some members, which would save money for people with chronic diseases who may be seeing multiple numbers of doctors.

Finally, the bill increases monitoring of private insurance program marketers who, some critics charge, use deceptive means to get some seniors to sign on to their programs.

HEAD OF VA RESIGNS: Jim Nicholson, who has served as Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Bush administration for the past two and a half years, has resigned.

Nicholson, a Vietnam War veteran, cited the fact that he is approaching 70 shortly as one reason for retiring. His term was marred by serious budget shortfalls for the VA. Nicholson also had to weather some embarrassing moments last year when personal data records were stolen from his agency. They were later recovered. Nicholson said the mishaps resulted in better security measures for electronic medical record keeping being adopted by the VA, which provides health care for nearly 8 million vets.

Senior Spotlight

By John Toscano

coalition with some Republicans that would create enough votes to override any veto.

Democrats in the house are formulating a bill to weaken the Medicare Advantage plans. Congressman Charles Rangel (D-Harlem), chairman of the powerful House Ways & Means Committee, has said the Dems' proposed legislation would reverse the Republican drive to privatize Medicare by reducing payments to the private Medicare insurance plans that presently cover 8 million of the 43 million members of Medicare.

Bush and Republicans who strongly favor the private insurance-run Medicare programs say they provide better coverage than regular Medicare programs at 10 percent extra cost, but Democrats dispute this, saying traditional Medicare is as good as the private Medicare program coverage and less expensive.

Supporters of the House Democratic proposal to block privatization of Medicare include the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, (AFSCME) and the AFL-CIO, a national coalition of unions that includes several New York City municipal unions.

This past Monday, AFSCME staged a Calls-to-Congress Day, urging its members to call their congressional representative to express their support of the House Medicare improvement legislation.

In the AFSCME brochure, the union charged: "The [U.S.] government is over-

Dolores Allogiamento Dies, Was Jackson Heights AARP President

Members of the Jackson Heights Chapter 991 of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) mourn the passing of Dolores Allogiamento, president of the chapter for four years. A great friend to many Jackson Heights residents, including Joseph Ricevuto and the Rev. Austin Armitstead, retired pastor of Community United Methodist Church, Allogiamento died July 17, 2007 after a brief illness.

Despite the fact that her life was fully occupied with being a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, Allogiamento made time to reach out to the community and many charities in the name of AARP. She gave wholeheartedly of herself to this organization which gave seniors a place to meet, interact and have enjoyable times socializing with many others.

YOM'S PAIN CLINIC
"THE NATURAL SOLUTION TO YOUR PAIN"

WE PROVIDE TOTAL TREATMENT THAT INCLUDES BOTH WESTERN & EASTERN THERAPY WITH ACCURATE CONSIDERATION FROM YOUR THERAPIST TODAY!

YOM'S PAIN CLINIC

HABLAMOS ESPAÑOL

- CHIROPRACTIC
- REHABILITATION
- ACUPUNCTURE
- PHYSICAL THERAPY
- NEUROLOGY

MOST INSURANCES
MEDICARE
CAR ACCIDENT INJURIES
WORKER'S COMPENSATION

ASTORIA : 718.274.4200 | 43-01 BROADWAY, ASTORIA, NY
FLUSHING : 718.888.1641 | 35-11 MURRAY STREET, FLUSHING, NY

WE OFFER COMPLETE

FOOT CARE

WE CARE FOR ALL PROBLEMS INVOLVING YOUR FEET

- BUNIONS • HAMMERTOES
- HEEL SPURS • SPORTS MEDICINE
- SPECIAL ATTENTION TO DIABETIC FOOT CARE

A WARM, CARING ENVIRONMENT WHERE PATIENTS ARE PEOPLE FIRST

MEDICAL ASSIGNMENT ACCEPTED
MOST MAJOR MEDICAL, UNION & INSURANCE PLANS

O. JOSEPH FALCONE, D.P.M., F.A.C.F.A.S.
Diplomate American Board of Podiatric Surgery
Fellow American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons
PODIATRIC MEDICINE AND SURGERY

35-01 30th AVENUE, ASTORIA, NY 11103 / SUITE 401
(718) 721-9292 • FAX: (718) 721-3222