

The Century Foundation

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NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Century Foundation Covers the Medicare Reform Debate

New York City— Medicare reform has returned to the national agenda. The Senate Finance Committee is close to agreement on a \$400 billion plan to include a prescription drug benefit in the federal health insurance program for older and some disabled Americans. President Bush has called for delivering Medicare through private plans and changing the traditional ways the program is administered and paid for.

Books, papers, and reports published by The Century Foundation raise serious questions about whether proposed reforms that move toward privatizing Medicare are sensible and fair. Proceeding without caution may result in disruption to the existing program and in harm to the most vulnerable beneficiaries.

The Century Foundation has worked to address questions that include:

? What Would the Consequences of Reforms Be?

Medicare Tomorrow: The Report of The Century Foundation's Task Force on Medicare Reform (2001), the work of a distinguished panel of policymakers and medical practitioners, succinctly explains premium support and other pro-competition proposals. It uses a set of basic principles, including the effect on beneficiaries of reforms, to show the possible impact of such reforms on Medicare's financing and its benefit package.

? What Would the Reforms Look Like?

In the background paper to *Medicare Tomorrow*, Lisa Potetz explains pro-competition proposals in Medicare and the similarities and differences between various approaches, such as the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, Medicare+Choice, and Premium Support.

Medicare: The Basics (2001) explains the basic elements of reform proposals in an accessible, introductory fashion.

? Are Such Reforms Necessary?

Budget expert Joseph White's book *False Alarm* (Johns Hopkins, 2001, updated paperback ed. spring 2003), asks whether Medicare and Social Security reforms are truly necessary given the current financial realities of these social insurance programs.

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? Who Would Be Most Affected by These Reforms?

A Place at the Table: Women's Needs and Medicare Reform, a report just released by The Century Foundation and the Institute for Women's Policy Research, by Medicare expert Marilyn Moon with Pamela Herd, points out that proposals such as those being promoted by President Bush may have serious flaws. If implemented without proper safeguards, beneficiaries may face steeply higher out-of-pocket costs. Those most likely to be affected are older women and poorer, sicker, and disabled beneficiaries.

In The Pipeline

TCF intends to publish two full-length books later this year that take up the issue of competitive reforms to Medicare. Henry Aaron and Robert Reischauer are making a new set of proposals for reform; while Jonathan Oberlander is writing a critique of competition-based proposals.

On the Web

The Century Foundation offers information and analysis of the Medicare reform debate on its MedicareWatch web site (www.medicarewatch.org). Many of our reports can be downloaded from the site. Ordering information for books is also available. The site also contains links to reports from other organizations, news articles, commentary, and other resources about the current reform debate.

Find an Expert or Get Information

Leif Wellington Haase is the Century Foundation's health policy fellow. He can provide information and commentary as this next round in the debate over Medicare reform unfolds. He can be reached at (212) 452-7725 or at haase@tcf.org.

Shoshanna Sofaer, the executive director of The Century Foundation Task Force on Medicare Reform, as well as authors of TCF reports and books on the topic are also available for comment. For more information, contact Christy Hicks in the Office of Public Affairs at (212) 452-7723 or hicks@tcf.org.

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