

Misplaced Democrat Priorities on Entitlement Reform

In March 2007, the Medicare trustees issued their first-ever Medicare funding warning, noting that the program is scheduled to consume a growing share of federal general revenues that could put other important national priorities at risk. This past March, the Medicare trustees issued a second consecutive warning, and noted that Medicare faces future unfunded obligations of \$86 trillion—more than six times our nation’s current Gross Domestic Product.

The President has proposed legislation to address the Medicare funding warning through medical liability reform and means-testing the Part D prescription drug benefit, and pursuant to provisions in the Medicare Modernization Act, Congressional Democrats had a statutory obligation to act to preserve the program’s fiscal integrity. Instead, House Democrats have brought to the floor legislation to:

- Prevent monkey bites by banning the sale of non-human primates (H.R. 2964);
- Require employers who offer health insurance to cover mental health “diseases” like caffeine intoxication, jet lag, and transvestic fetishism (Section 102(d) of H.R. 1424);
- Prohibit the sale of wild free-roaming horses and burros (H.R. 249);
- Name 92 post offices;
- Support the International Year of Sanitation (H. Con. Res. 318);
- Restrict the transport of solid waste between the United States and Canada (H.R. 518);
- Institute an alert system for sewage overflows (H.R. 2452);
- Waive permitting requirements for the discharge of bilge water (S. 2766);
- Recognize National Funeral Director and Mortician Day (H. Res. 892);
- Define an “over-the-road bus” for purposes of federal law (H.R. 3985);
- Provide exceptions for the \$1 coin dispensing capacity for certain vending machines (H.R. 3703);
- Authorize grants for the Eurasia Foundation (H.R. 2949);
- Recognize the importance of mobile homes (H. Res. 1010);
- Require weather radios to be installed in all manufactured homes (H.R. 2787);
- Create a Native Hawaiian tribe where one does not exist (H.R. 505);
- Make technical corrections to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (S. 2571);
- Protect popcorn workers from developing lung disease (H.R. 2693);
- Support the goals of National Passport Month (H. Res. 554);
- Ensure fairness in bail bond forfeiture (H.R. 2286);
- Permit representatives not from the 50 states to cast votes in Congress (H. Res. 78; H.R. 1905)
- Support the goals of National Trails Day (H. Res. 401); and
- Establish protected wilderness or trails in the Jefferson National Forest (H.R. 1011), the Star-Spangled Banner route (H.R. 1388), the Eightmile River (H.R. 986), the Skykomish River (H.R. 886), along the Washington-Rochambeau route (H.R. 1286), in New England (H.R. 1528), and along the “wild and scenic” Taunton River (H.R. 415).

While some of these bills may be worthwhile or even needed, many conservatives may believe that considering these and other pieces of legislation while ignoring Medicare’s significant future funding shortfalls represents severely misplaced priorities on the part of the Democrat majority—and a disservice to America’s seniors.

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