

December 16, 2009

To: NRLN Grassroots Network Members

From: NRLN President Bill Kadereit

Subject: NRLN Action Alert – Don't Cut Medicare To Pay For Health Care Reform

As you are probably aware from news reports, the U.S. Senate may be getting close to passing its health care reform bill, the Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act. The Congressional Budget Office has stated that the bill as currently proposed would result in spending \$848 billion over 10 years. As the NRLN has dug into the more than 2,000 pages of the bill and the CBO's report, we have become very concerned that \$404 billion of the cost would be covered by cuts mainly to Medicare and Medicaid.

Of the \$404 billion in cuts, \$162 billion will be reduced subsidies to Medicare Advantage plans. Thousands of NRLN Grassroots Network members have Medicare Advantage plans and they would see their cost for those plans increase. Of the remaining \$242 billion, over \$200 billion would be reduced Medicare payments to doctors and hospitals along with reductions in in-patient payments, home health care and hospice services. These are unacceptable costs being placed on retirees.

I urge you to immediately send the NRLN's sample letter to your Senators. Tell them it is intolerable to fund health care reform on the backs of older Americans. Ask them to amend the bill to eliminate the cuts to Medicare to show they oppose eliminating billions in Medicare payments to doctors and hospitals and cutting support for numerous plans important to older Americans. Senators need to understand that if Medicare can't be protected in the bill, they should vote against the bill and start over.

Please go to <http://capwiz.com/abtr/home/> to access the NRLN Action Alert. Look for the Action Alert headline: DON'T CUT MEDICARE TO PAY FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM. Click on the "Take Action" button. On the next screen, type in your zip code and click "GO" to identify your elected representatives and access the sample letter. Be sure to personalize the letter with your own comments. If you have a problem accessing the Action Alert with the above link, go to www.nrln.org and click on the "Take Action Now" headline at the top of the NRLN website's home page. Send your email today.

It would also help to call the Washington, DC or state/district office of your Senators. Use the information in the sample letter to express your concerns about cuts to Medicare in the name of health care reform. Phone numbers can be found through the NRLN's Capwiz website at <http://capwiz.com/abtr/dbq/officials/>. The more constituents who write and call their Senators, the better chance there is in gaining their attention.

Given that we will need to continue to fight against a number of elements in the health care reform legislation in addition to lobbying for the issues we support, we need the support of all of our Grassroots Network members. Not only do we need you to email letters to Washington and talk with your members of Congress, we also need your financial support through an individual member contribution of \$25, \$50, \$75 or more. Any amount you can contribute will be appreciated. You may make your check or money order payable to **NRLN, Inc.** and mail it along with the Membership Contribution Form at: <http://www.nrln.org/printad.php>. Or, you may make your contribution online with your credit card through PayPal on the NRLN website at <http://www.nrln.org> by clicking on the "Support the NRLN" link on the home page.

Bill Kadereit, President
National Retiree Legislative Network

Dear Senator _____:

I am alarmed that the \$848 billion health care reform bill being debated by Senators would cover much of the cost, according to the CBO reports, through a net reduction of \$404 billion in benefits, affecting literally millions of retirees who are covered by Medicare and Medicaid.

Of the \$404 billion net reduction, \$162 billion in reduced subsidies to Medicare Advantage plans will directly impact millions of retirees currently enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans. Many are already receiving increases, effective January 1, 2010, in monthly premiums of nearly \$100 per month. If the Senate is going to reduce or eliminate Medicare Advantage subsidies you should support a provision which would at least offer a 5-year window within which Medicare Advantage consumers would be allowed to buy Medigap coverage regardless of pre-existing conditions or lapses in the time frame for choosing Medigap. Fixed-income seniors should not suffer as a result of sudden subsidy withdrawals by Congress.

Of the other \$242 billion in cuts, more than \$200 billion would be reduced Medicare payments to doctors and hospitals along with reductions in Medicare in-patient payments, home health care and hospice services. These are intolerable costs being placed on retirees.

It is unacceptable to fund health care reform on the backs of older Americans who are now on fixed incomes. Any reform of the nation's health care system should do no harm to retirees. If Medicare can't be protected in the bill, you should vote against the bill and start over.

The Senate should be working to insure that the Medicare system is on a sound financial foundation, not eliminating billions in Medicare payments to doctors and hospitals and cutting support for other plans important to retirees. As a member of Congress you are very aware that retirees prepaid many of these benefits through a mandatory payroll tax paid over their working lifetimes. It is unethical and immoral to now take them back.

True health care reform for Americans is too important for Senators to be pressured by a "pass it before Christmas" deadline. Health care reform must be done right and that does not include damaging Medicare that 44 million Americans depend on for the major part of their medical needs. It is not progress to penalize seniors.

Please don't turn your back on America's retirees who can least afford to pay more out of our pockets for our health care.

Sincerely,