Medicare Rights Center **NEWS**

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Statement Regarding the Medicare Overhaul Bill "Compromise"

Robert M. Hayes, president of the Medicare Rights Center, made the following statement regarding the "compromise" on the Medicare overhaul bill:

The Medicare Rights Center's consumer hotline receives over 70,000 calls annually from people with Medicare in need of assistance securing health care. More than any other need, older Americans call us with pleas for help in affording prescription drugs. More often than not, these men and women must go without the medicine their doctors have prescribed.

A Medicare drug benefit is a matter of life and death, sickness or health, for older and disabled men and women. We believe that a comprehensive Medicare drug benefit is a moral imperative. To be acceptable, the Medicare Rights Center has set a very low bar to support Medicare legislation: it must be better than no bill for people with Medicare. The legislation now being promoted by Congressional leaders cannot meet even this low bar. The bill under consideration does more harm than good.

For certain industries, the bill is a bonanza. For some niche groups, the bill has net gains. But on balance, for those of us who depend on Medicare today – whether for ourselves, our parents or our grandparents – and for those who will depend on Medicare in the future, the bill is worse than no bill at all. We therefore urge members of Congress to defeat it.

Human need and moral decency are losing to the forces of ideology and politics. It may now be too late to reverse this. Without question, more Americans will be buried prematurely because they could not pay for the medicine they need.

To learn more about how people with Medicare, taxpayers, members of Congress, private health plans, the drug industry, insurance companies, corporations, health care providers, and states would fare under the compromised Medicare overhaul bill, read the chart **Medicare "Compromise": Winners and Losers** at http://www.medicarerights.org/rxcompromiseframeset.html

To speak with Medicare Rights Center clients about how the Medicare overhaul bill "compromise" will impact their health care costs, please contact Deane Beebe at (212) 204-6219.

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Medicare Rights Center (MRC) is the largest independent source of Medicare information and assistance in the United States. Founded in 1989, MRC helps older adults and people with disabilities get high-quality, affordable health care.