

# Part A Funding In Jeopardy

## 'Warning' Means Congress Must Fast-Track Medicare Law

**T**he Medicare Part A trust fund, which pays for inpatient hospital and related care, will become insolvent by 2017, based on the "Medicare Trustees Report" issued in May. This is two years earlier than what the board reported in 2008.

The report marks the fourth consecutive year that the annual general revenue funding contribution to total Medicare expenditures is projected to exceed 45 percent within the first seven years of the 75-year projection period. This triggers the "Medicare funding warning" that Congress created in the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003.

This means the president must address the funding warning in legislation within 15 days of the next budget, and

the proposal needs to receive expedited consideration in Congress.

"This year's 'Trustees Report' describes large long-term financial imbalances for Social Security and Medicare and demonstrates the need for timely and effective action," according to the report. "The sooner that solutions are adopted, the more varied and gradual they can be.

"The financial difficulties facing Social Security and Medicare pose serious challenges," the report says. "For Social Security, the reform options are relatively well understood but the choices are difficult. Medicare is a bigger challenge. Its cost growth can be contained without sacrificing quality of care only if health care cost growth more

generally is contained. But despite the difficulties—indeed, because of the difficulties—it is essential that action be taken soon, particularly to control health care costs."

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius has said that President Obama understands that Medicare is an essential program that provides care for millions of seniors and people with disabilities. "We will do whatever it takes to protect it," she said. "This isn't just another government report. It's a wake-up call for everyone who is concerned about Medicare and the health of our economy. And it's yet another sign that we can't wait for real, comprehensive health reform."

—Suzanne Struglinski

## Cards Answer Family Questions About Long Term Care

**T**he Heinz Family Philanthropies and the Foundation for the Future of Aging have released a new series of informational cards designed to answer questions for families facing difficult decisions about long term care.

Teresa Heinz, chairman of the Heinz Family Philanthropies, explained, "The 10 Questions to Answer... series targets family caregivers to help them through the long term care maze. Our goal is to help caregivers and their families understand that they are not alone."

"Too often, it's at the last minute and in great stress that families are forced to confront the complicated and difficult questions surrounding long term care," said Jeffrey Lewis, president of the Heinz Family Philanthropies. "Our

goal is to raise the key questions and provide answers to help every family make the best decisions possible before there's a crisis."

The "10 Questions to Answer..." campaign is intended to help provide caregivers—particularly women—answers to myriad questions dealing with long term care and the most up-to-date, concise, accurate, and unbiased information related to important issues about long term care, a news release said.

The most recently released 10 Questions to Answer...card is titled "Before Choosing a Nursing or Assisted Living Home for Your Loved One."

The other four cards in the series are:

- 10 Questions to Answer Before You or a Your Loved One Needs Long-Term Care...

- 10 Questions to Answer Before You or Your Loved One Purchase Long-Term Care...

- 10 Questions to Answer Before Managing Your Long-Term Care Services...

- 10 Questions to Answer When You Are Not Happy With Your Long-Term Care...

"We want people to make the right choice based on the best information," said Jan Thayer, chairman of the Foundation for the Future of Aging, which is partnering with the Heinz Family Philanthropies on this project.

According to the Heinz Family Philanthropies Web site, the series will be distributed via index-sized laminated cards to legislative and non-legislative leaders and decision makers and to the public at large, at [www.tenquestionstoanswer.org](http://www.tenquestionstoanswer.org).

