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SCHAKOWSKY: BUSH ADMINISTRATION MISSTATEMENT OF THE DAY - Medicare DRUG CARDS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued "The Bush Administration Misstatement of the Day" on the privately-run drug cards for Medicare beneficiaries.

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The New York Times reported today that Medicare beneficiaries are confused about the privately-run drug cards and what seniors are finding is a program that offers "73 competing drug discount cards, each providing different savings on different medications, and all subject to change."

The Bush Administration defended the "complexity" of the plan.□ Mark McClellan of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services said, "We're seeing more plans offering better benefits," adding that seniors could save 15% or more using the cards.□

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However, seniors are not experiencing "better benefits."□ According to the article:

Sydney Bild, 81, a retired doctor in Chicago, compared the discount cards with the prices he paid ordering his drugs by mail from Canada. Dr. Bild pays \$4,000 to \$5,000 a year for five medications. When he checked the government Web site, he said the best plans were about 50 percent to 60 percent higher than what he was paying.□

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But Dr. Bild said his main objection to the new plans was that companies could change prices on drugs, or change the drugs covered. Medicare requires plans to cover only one drug in each of 209 common categories. Consumers can change cards only once a year. Committing to a card is "like love - it's a sometime thing," Dr. Bild said. "What if I chose one? They could drop my drugs two weeks later."