

March 16, 1999

Letter to the Editor

Letters to the Editor
The Washington Post
Washington, D.C.

Dear Editor:

A fundamental consideration is strangely missing from David Broder's Sunday, March 14 column praising a proposal by Medicare Commission members Senator John Breaux and Representative Bill Thomas: the detrimental effect that plan would have on the millions of seniors and persons with disabilities who rely on Medicare.

By far the majority of the proposed "savings" under the Breaux-Thomas plan would come from pushing seniors and persons with disabilities into HMOs and increasing costs to those who want to stay in traditional Medicare. Under this plan, Medicare beneficiaries who wish to remain with their own doctors would pay higher premiums (as much as \$1200 a year). Many seniors, who already pay more than 20% of their income for health care, would face greater cost-sharing when they need home health and other services. And, despite the problems older persons face in finding affordable insurance, the proposal would toss 65 and 66 year olds out of Medicare.

David Broder may believe in the Breaux-Thomas plan. He seems to have faith in a managed care industry that is cutting corners on care, reducing benefits, and threatening to pull out of Medicare altogether unless they are paid significantly higher premiums. Those of us who oppose turning Medicare over to the HMOs respectfully disagree.

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress