

105TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2528

To direct the Commissioner of Social Security to establish a demonstration project to conduct outreach efforts to increase awareness of the availability of medicare cost-sharing assistance to eligible low-income medicare beneficiaries.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 29, 1998

Mr. McCONNELL introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance

A BILL

To direct the Commissioner of Social Security to establish a demonstration project to conduct outreach efforts to increase awareness of the availability of medicare cost-sharing assistance to eligible low-income medicare beneficiaries.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress makes the following findings:

5 (1) Since 1988, three cost-sharing payment pro-
6 grams that provide certain low-income elderly and
7 disabled individuals with financial assistance in cov-

1 ering Medicare beneficiary costs have been estab-
2 lished by law.

3 (2) While eligibility for Medicare cost-sharing
4 assistance has expanded, and while the Social Secu-
5 rity Administration, the Health Care Financing Ad-
6 ministration, and State agencies are working coop-
7 eratively to identify and implement reforms to cure
8 the chronic deficiencies associated with the programs
9 described in paragraph (1), reports have shown that
10 gaps in beneficiary knowledge and deficiencies in
11 program administration by Federal and State agen-
12 cies present persistent barriers to enrolling eligible
13 beneficiaries in such programs.

14 (3) The financial plight of Social Security and
15 Medicare beneficiaries who experience critical income
16 shifts due to the death of a spouse is of particular
17 concern. Statistics furnished by the Social Security
18 Administration show that 40 percent of nonmarried
19 women (a category that includes widows) rely on So-
20 cial Security benefits for 90 percent of their income
21 in comparison to only 18 percent of married couples.
22 Further, nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ of nonmarried women rely on So-
23 cial Security retirement benefits as their sole source
24 of income.

1 (4) While current reform proposals concentrate
2 on reaching potential eligible beneficiaries upon ini-
3 tial enrollment in Social Security or Medicare, the fi-
4 nancial vulnerability of widowed spouses can arise at
5 any time after a senior has begun to receive retire-
6 ment benefits.

7 **SEC. 2. DEMONSTRATION PROJECT.**

8 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

9 (1) OUTREACH.—The Commissioner shall es-
10 tablish a demonstration project to conduct outreach
11 efforts to—

12 (A) identify individuals entitled to benefits
13 under the medicare program who may be eligi-
14 ble for medical assistance for payment of the
15 cost of medicare cost-sharing under the medic-
16 aid program pursuant to sections
17 1902(a)(10)(E) and 1933 of the Social Security
18 Act (42 U.S.C. 1396a(a)(10)(E); 1396u-3);
19 and

20 (B) notify such individuals of the availabil-
21 ity of such medical assistance under such sec-
22 tions.

23 (2) CONTENT OF NOTICE.—Any notice fur-
24 nished under paragraph (1) shall state that eligi-
25 bility for medicare cost-sharing assistance under

1 such sections is conditioned upon the individual pro-
2 viding an accurate statement as to whether or not
3 the individual has tax-exempt income, and, if so, the
4 amount of such income and, in the case of an indi-
5 vidual residing in a State that imposes an asset test
6 for such eligibility, the amount of countable assets
7 the individual has.

8 (b) COORDINATION WITH STATES AND OTHER FED-
9 ERAL AGENCIES.—

10 (1) FURNISHING INFORMATION TO STATES.—In
11 conducting the demonstration project established
12 under subsection (a), the Commissioner shall furnish
13 the appropriate agency of each State with informa-
14 tion consisting of the identity of individuals residing
15 in the State that the Commissioner determines are
16 or may be eligible for medical assistance for pay-
17 ment of the cost of medicare cost-sharing under the
18 medicaid program under sections 1902(a)(10)(E)
19 and 1933 of the Social Security Act, and shall peri-
20 odically update any such information as appropriate.

21 (2) COORDINATION WITH IRS AND HCFA.—Ex-
22 cept as otherwise prohibited by law, in conducting
23 such demonstration project the Commissioner, in co-
24 operation with the Commissioner of the Internal
25 Revenue Service and the Administrator of the

1 Health Care Financing Administration, shall furnish
2 the appropriate agency of each State with available
3 income and asset information of individuals residing
4 in the State who are or may be eligible for the medi-
5 cal assistance described in paragraph (1).

6 (c) DURATION.—The Commissioner shall conduct the
7 demonstration project during the 1-year period beginning
8 on October 1, 1998.

9 (d) REPORT.—Not later than 6 months after the
10 completion of the demonstration project, the Commis-
11 sioner, after consultation with the Commissioner of the In-
12 ternal Revenue Service and the Administrator of the
13 Health Care Financing Administration, shall submit to
14 Congress a report on the outreach efforts and results of
15 such efforts under the project. The report may include any
16 recommendations for legislative or administrative actions
17 to further carry out the purpose of the project.

18 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

19 (1) COMMISSIONER.—The term “Commis-
20 sioner” means the Commissioner of Social Security.

21 (2) MEDICAID PROGRAM.—The term “medicaid
22 program” means the program of medical assistance
23 established under title XIX of the Social Security
24 Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.).

1 (3) MEDICARE PROGRAM.—The term “medicare
2 program” means the health insurance program es-
3 tablished under title XVIII of the Social Security
4 Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.).

5 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—From
6 sums made available to the Social Security Administration
7 for fiscal year 1999 to carry out research and demonstra-
8 tions activities, not more than \$5,000,000 may be obli-
9 gated to carry out the demonstration project under this
10 Act.

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