

The Reid Bill Creates New Government Rationing Programs

First, the Reid bill would empower the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, which recently recommended against mammograms.

- Section 2713 of the Reid bill would require every health plan in America to cover without cost-sharing Task Force-recommended prevention services.
- Section 4105 would authorize the Secretary to modify benefits under Medicare if consistent with Task Force recommendations and deny payment for prevention services the Task Force recommends against.
- Overall, the Reid bill relies on Task Force recommendations at least 14 times.
- Secretary Sebelius recently insisted that the HHS Secretary, not the Task Force, decides what gets covered. The plain language of Section 2713 and other sections of the bill contradicts her.

Second, Section 6301 of the bill would create new comparative effectiveness research (CER) programs.

- CER compares drugs, medical devices and treatments head-to-head to obtain better information about what works best and what costs the least.
- Great Britain and other foreign governments use CER to decide which treatments patients can or cannot have.
- The British CER institute is called the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE, rhymes with “price”).
- The Reid bill’s CER institute would be called the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute.

Third, Section 3403 of the bill would create a new Independent Medicare Advisory Board (IMAB).

- Each year, this permanent board of unelected members would dictate Medicare cuts to achieve an arbitrary spending target.
- The Wall Street Journal has dubbed it a “Rationing Commission”.

Fourth, Section 3021 of the bill would create a new “Innovation Center” to give the agency that runs Medicare new rationing powers.

- Medicare already has started to ration by curtailing the use of virtual colonoscopies, certain wound-healing devices, and a branded asthma drug.
- The courts intervened to make Medicare stop rationing the expensive asthma drug because rationing is against the law now.
- The Innovation Center would get broad new legal authority to decide which treatments to ration.