



President
George J. Kourpias

Secretary-Treasurer
Ruben Burks

May 2008

An Open Letter to Retirees:

I'm always reading. I love to keep up on what is going on, and like you, I believe it is our responsibility as citizens to stay informed and make intelligent decisions.

Two articles I recently came across really caught my eye. The first said, "**Medicare Advantage Drives Humana Profit Above Expectations.**" (Associated Press, 4/28/08). Humana's profits are up 12.5 percent this year because of its success with government contracts.

And then I read "**Medicare 'drifting towards disaster': U.S. Official.**" (Reuters, 4/29/08). According to the article, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt said that Medicare faces a dire financial future.

Am I the only one who is confused?

On one hand, we hear Medicare is in trouble. But yet we keep sending more and more tax dollars to insurance companies to run Medicare Advantage programs. Big corporations are now making large profits on what our government used to do as a public service. We subsidize insurance companies – to the tune of \$150 billion over the next ten years – to operate privatized Medicare Advantage plans, at a cost between 12 and 19 percent higher than if Medicare directly served these same people.

Some of us are old enough to remember what people said when Medicare was first proposed. The critics predicted it would be a disaster, the start of socialized medicine. Now, 43 years later, Medicare has been the savior for millions of seniors. But our government sees it as yet another public asset that can be sold off for private gain.

In June, Congress may be debating the future of these federal subsidies to private insurance companies. If this happens, it is more important than ever that we understand the issues and where our elected officials stand.

We all know what Medicare has meant for our generation. Let's make sure it stays strong for all who follow us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George J. Kourpias".

George J. Kourpias
President
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