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## **EXPERT RESPONDS TO MEDICARE'S CHANGING PRICE TAG**

On February 8th the Administration provided another new, increased figure for the projected cost of the new Medicare prescription drug program. Instead of the \$400 billion over the decade from 2006 through 2015 promised when the bill passed Congress, the Medicare Administrator now projects \$720 billion. Meanwhile, the President proposes dramatic cuts and restructuring of Medicare, Medicaid, and a vast array of other successful public programs. The Administration is also set on a course that pays private plans about 8% more to provide the same services as the traditional Medicare program.

“Medicare's ever-changing price tag is an example of the attempts by this administration to pull the wool over the eyes of America's seniors. Instead, Congress and the Administration should be smart shoppers on behalf of our oldest and sickest citizens,” says Judith Stein, executive director of the Center for Medicare Advocacy. Ms. Stein continues: “The Administration and Congress should insist on bulk purchasing drugs on behalf of all 41 million Medicare beneficiaries and stop pouring money into private plans. To do otherwise is to waste taxpayers' money and to value private industry over seniors.”

The Center for Medicare Advocacy calls on Congress to act now to rein in unnecessary and wasteful payments that could be used to help sick seniors. “It's time to make Medicare priorities clear,” says Ms. Stein. “The goal should be to provide affordable access to health care and medication, not to restructure Medicare into an array of private plans, regardless of costs.”

Judith Stein is available to discuss the Medicare Act, at the telephone number and email address above.

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