

Perspectives on Medicare's financial sustainability

ISSUE: Given the way in which Medicare is structured and financed today, how sustainable is the program into the future? What approaches should policymakers use to better assure sustainability?

KEY POINTS: Each year, MedPAC's *March Report to the Congress* includes an introductory chapter that puts the Commission's recommendations for payment updates within their broader budget, policy, and health care delivery context. The motivation for these chapters is the Commission's recognition of the long-term financial difficulties of Medicare and the need to improve and sustain the program for current and future beneficiaries and taxpayers.

To prepare for the 2007 context chapter, we will briefly review the latest projections of the Medicare Trustees on the program's financial outlook. We will also hear from three Medicare experts who bring a range of perspectives about the best mix of approaches policymakers should take to sustain the program. The speakers are:

- Joseph R. Antos, Ph.D., the Wilson H. Taylor Scholar in Health Care and Retirement Policy at the American Enterprise Institute
- Marilyn Moon, Ph.D., Vice President and Director of the Health Program at American Institutes for Research
- Len Nichols, Ph.D., Director of the Health Policy Program at the New America Foundation

ACTION: After an overview of Medicare's financial picture, panelists will provide their perspectives and answer questions. Commissioners can then discuss the implications of the presentations for Medicare. The discussion will guide staff work on this topic for the 2007 report cycle.

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