

## POLICY SYMPOSIUM COMMEMORATES 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF MEDICARE

### From US Dept. of Health & Human Services

■(WASHINGTON) In recognition of the 30th anniversary of Medicare, a national health care policy symposium, "Medicare: Advancing Towards the 21st Century" will be held Monday, May 6, 1996, at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas. The site was chosen to honor President Johnson's leadership in the passage and implementation of the Medicare program.

The symposium, co-sponsored by the Health Care Financing Administration, the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, the LBJ Library, the Commonwealth Fund, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, will bring together leaders and experts in the fields of health care and health policy. Discussions will include the history of the Medicare program, how the program has shaped the U.S. health care system, how health care has evolved over the past 30 years, and the challenges that the Medicare program will

face in the future.

"In its 30 years of service, Medicare has contributed to the health, well-being, and peace of mind not just of the elderly, but of all Americans," said HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala. "This anniversary is a good time to assess our accomplishments as well as the challenges ahead for Medicare."

Speakers will examine some of the critical issues facing Medicare today and in the future, past and future demographics of beneficiaries, and politics of health policy. In addition, there will be panel discussions focusing on the changes in health care over the past 30 years and the role Medicare has played from the perspective of beneficiaries, providers, insurers and Congress.

Bruce C. Vladeck, administrator of the Health Care Financing Administration said, "This conference provides an exciting opportunity to reflect on how, in 30 years, Medicare has changed the country's perspective on health care."

The Medicare program currently provides health care coverage to more than 38 million Americans. Over the past 30 years,

Medicare coverage of health services has made a significant difference in the lives of elderly Americans. The life expectancy of people over the age of 65 has increased more than three years since 1950. In 1950, the average life expectancy for a 65-year-old was 79; today, it is 82. Improvements in Social Security and Medicare's coverage of health expenses have also been important factors in the decline of the elderly's poverty rate from 29 percent in 1966 to 12 percent today.

Despite Medicare's coverage of health expenses, the elderly still pay a significant share of their health expenses out-of-pocket: In 1994, about 18 percent of seniors' after-tax income was spent on health care, compared to 5 percent for the under 65 population. Medicare beneficiaries are generally satisfied with the overall quality of the medical care they receive and find that Medicare coverage offers them peace of mind.

### *Reversing, continued from page 4*

jected to be \$172 billion. Solely by cutting spending over the President's objections, and not by raising taxes, it's now down to \$144 billion. That's still a bigger deficit than I like, and I still believe 2002 is too long for balancing the budget. But it's major progress nonetheless. The lower deficit helps keep interest rates down and creates jobs by boosting economic growth.

In his State of the Union speech, President Clinton vowed that the "era of big government is over." Unfortunately, he never seemed to deliver that message to his budget drafters; the President submitted a plan to spend about \$50-billion more each year than Congress had proposed, and raise taxes to boot. But we in Congress had long ago committed to shrink big government; and we've kept our promise.

The \$5.1-trillion national debt is already at \$20,000 per person. Thanks to compound interest, today's children must pay \$187,000 in lifetime taxes solely to pay interest on that debt. The Clinton Administration calculated that if today's children get stuck with paying the national debt, they'll have to pay 83 percent of their lifetime income in taxes.

I don't want our children to keep only 17 cents for each dollar they earn. Tough as it is to do, I want to get the budget balanced, and reduce our debt. The budget battle with the White House wasn't pretty, but it helped a lot of progress."

## OKLAHOMA CITIZENS INVITED TO ATTEND REHABILITATION SERVICES' PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### From Dept. of Rehabilitative Services

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) It's not every day that one person's input can change the future — particularly in an area as important as services to Oklahoma citizens with disabilities. The public will have this opportunity at public hearings scheduled on Wednesday, May 15, in Oklahoma City.

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, in cooperation with the Statewide Independent Living Council and the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council, will use information gathered at the public meetings to revise state and strategic plans that implement and fund rehabilitation services to Oklahomans with disabilities.

Topics for discussion are expected to include comments on spending federal funds for vocational rehabilitation, determining eligibility for services and balancing funding limitations with the need to provide services to increasing numbers of people with disabilities. Participants are encouraged to bring written material to the hearings as supplements to their comments.

The public hearings in Tulsa will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Hardesty State Regional Library Auditorium at 6737 S. 85th East Avenue. The library is located north of Woodland Hills Mall across the parking lot from Dillard's department store. The Oklahoma City public hearing is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Oklahoma City Evaluation Center Auditorium. The center is located at 5813 S. Robinson, two blocks west of Santa Fe and one half block north of S.W. 59th Street.

For more information, call the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services at (405) 951-3400 or toll free at (800) 845-8476. The telephone lines are voice and TTY/TDD accessible.

Those who cannot attend the public meetings may send written comments to Mark Barnes, Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, 3535 N.W. 58th Street, Suite 500, Oklahoma City, OK 73112-4815. These comments must be received no later than June 1.