LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

New Medicare Idea Is Familiar

Thanks to professors Jacob S. Hacker and Theodore R. Marmor for their excellent Other Opinion article about proposals to increase Medicare premiums for those with higher incomes [Oct. 22, "An Unhealthy Step Backward For Medicare"]. This "income-related premium" notion is tricky because it seems reasonable at first blush. For people like me, however, who've been advocating for Medicare beneficiaries for decades, the notion is too reminiscent of the surtax in the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act of 1989, passed under President George H.W. Bush.

The surtax was the death knell of MCCA, and MCCA included a much richer set of benefits than is contemplated in the bills currently being considered by Congress.

If income-related premiums are passed, how will the legislation fare? Would beneficiaries who have to pay more seek repeal again, as they did under MCCA?

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