

Wyden Slams Trump Rebates For Draining Medicare Improvement Fund

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Ranking Senate Finance Committee Democrat Ron Wyden (OR) blasted the administration for draining the \$2 billion Medicare Improvement Fund by sending one-time \$90 payments, to nearly 21 million seniors enrolled in traditional Medicare. President Donald Trump and the White House announced the payments on Friday (Oct. 2), just days after the administration dug into Affordable Care Act user fees to send \$500 checks to about 950,000 unsubsidized ACA enrollees.

"This year, Trump handed seniors a \$200 monthly Medicare premium for the first time ever, and he also shoveled \$20 billion in extra payments to insurance companies selling private Medicare plans," Wyden said in a statement. "This is another desperate attempt by a failed president to escape Americans' revulsion with his failed agenda, amounting to one tank of Trump-inflated gas."

The administration is making a \$90 premium rebate available to certain Medicare beneficiaries "because the best way to improve Medicare is to put healthcare dollar back where they belong - in the hands of our Medicare beneficiaries -- and make coverage more affordable," according to a CMS fact sheet.

The payments will be made to 20.8 million beneficiaries on Medicare Part D who reside in the United States, are not getting premium assistance from Medicaid and are not paying the adjusted monthly about required for individuals earning more than \$109,000. Medicare Advantage enrollees are excluded.

Most eligible beneficiaries will get the funding via direct deposit around Oct. 8. The money will be followed by an email or letter from the president in mid-October. Others will get checks from the Treasury with the message "Medicare Improvement Fund Payment: \$90 Payment to Offset October Premium," according to the fact sheet.

The Medicare Improvement Fund was created by Congress in 2008 to make improvements to services for individuals entitled to or enrolled in Medicare Parts A or B, and was later extended so it could be used to adjust payments for providers. It is funded by the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance Trust Fund. -- Amy Lotven(alotven@iwppnews.com)