

Officials: Drug plan enrollment up sharply

At least 1 million senior Americans reportedly signed up for the Medicare prescription drug plan in the program's final week of enrollment.

Quoting a preliminary tally, Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt says 38 million of the 42.5 million eligible elderly and disabled people have drug coverage through the new Medicare plan, an employer or another government health program, reports The Washington Post.

Mark B. McClellan, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, called the program is a "historic success."

While the officials were lauding the plan, U.S. lawmakers planned to revise the rules for those Medicare patients who missed the deadline. One bill would eliminate a financial penalty for those who wait to enroll until the next signup period later this year, the report said.

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