

## ***Ridding Ourselves of Noxious "Death Panel" Discourse***

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### INTRODUCTION

On Friday, April 11, 2014, Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), along with co-sponsors Senators Chris Coons (D-DE) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), introduced the "Medicare Choices Empowerment and Protection Act" (S. 2240), which would pay eligible Medicare beneficiaries if they create an advance directive: \$75 if they create an A.D. online, and \$50 if they create an A.D. manually.

The bill would also create a system to store the advance directives to make them easily accessible for health care proxies, health care providers, and beneficiaries. Beneficiaries would be able to register their advance directives during their initial enrollment in Medicare Part C (Medicare Advantage).

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## ANALYSIS

In a press release, Sen. Coburn said the following: "Advance directives are a valuable, voluntary tool that offers patients the ability to protect patients' future health care preferences or to specify someone to act on their behalf. This bill would encourage their adoption by Medicare beneficiaries and is intended to start a discussion about how best to move this policy forward. We welcome constructive comments from stakeholders to improve this plan and to better encourage the voluntary adoption of advance directives by Medicare beneficiaries that can be accessible in real-time by their physicians and hospitals."

Sen. Coons also added: "Every American deserves the opportunity to live his or her final days with dignity," Senator Coons said. "Too many Americans leave their end-of-life care to chance or to the preferences of distraught family members. This bill will help more Americans ensure they are the ones making the choices about their end-of-life care, reducing confusion and empowering more Americans to spend their final days and hours on their own terms."

## CONCLUSION

Though advance directives are not a panacea for end-of-life decision-making, efforts to encourage advance directives recognizes, at the very least, the importance of end-of-life contemplation.

## REFERENCES

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<http://www.mcknights.com/government-would-pay-seniors-to-create-advanced-directives-under-senate-bill/article/342803/>

"Senator advances bill to pay medicare beneficiaries to register advance directives" by Craig Klugman

<http://www.bioethics.net/2014/04/senator-advances-bill-to-pay-medicare-beneficiaries-to-register-advance-directives/>