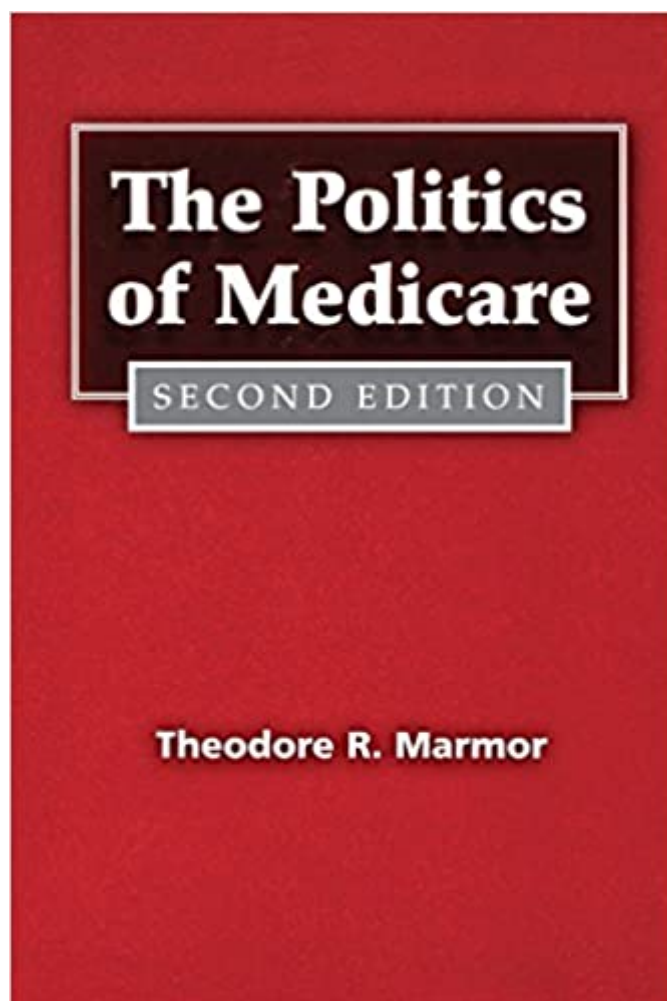


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# The Politics Of Medicare (Social Institutions And Social Change)



## Synopsis

On July 30, 1965, President Johnson flew to Independence, Missouri to sign the Medicare bill. The new statute included two related insurance programs to finance substantial portions of the hospital and physician expenses incurred by Americans over the age of sixty-five. Public attempts to improve American health standards have typically precipitated bitter debate, even as the issue has shifted from the professional and legal status of physicians to the availability of hospital care and public health programs. In *The Politics of Medicare*, Marmor helps the reader understand Medicare's origins, and he interprets the history of the program and explores what happened to Medicare politically as it turned from a legislative act in the mid-1960s to a major program of American government in the three decades since. This is a vibrant study of an important piece of legislation that asks and answers several questions: How could the American political system yield a policy that simultaneously appeased anti-governmental biases and used the federal government to provide a major entitlement? How was the American Medical Association legally overcome yet placated enough to participate in the program? And how did the Medicare law emerge so enlarged from earlier proposals that themselves had caused so much controversy?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[A] cogent, compelling, and still largely uncontested account of the passage of America's largest and most politically salient government health program." —Jacob S.

Hacker, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* (symposium of reviews) "The Politics of Medicare . . . can be rightly viewed as a founding book in the study of health politics. . . . The second edition of Marmor's book provides a glimpse of what an alternative view of Medicare—one more informed by political science than economic theory—would look like. . . . The Politics of Medicare is free of the thick language, models, and formal theory that make so much of contemporary political science unreadable and frequently unintelligible."

Jonathan Oberlander, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* (symposium of reviews) "I do not believe . . . that there is any other single publication on this subject that has endured as well as The Politics of Medicare, or that prompted an invitation to revise an original volume so many years after its inception."

Mark A. Peterson, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* (symposium of reviews) "[T]he second edition of The Politics of Medicare is a model of clarity, concision, and . . . accuracy."

Bruce C. Vladeck, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* (symposium of reviews) "The substance of policies that are enacted is also shaped profoundly by politics and, in turn, shapes politics. Marmor's The Politics of Medicare recognizes this fundamental point and seeks to illuminate how the character of the program [Medicare] has followed so directly from its politics. . . . [W]hat will determine whether Congress changes Medicare [...]? The answer is the politics of Medicare—to which there is no better guide than Marmor's book."

Journal of the American Medical Association "This new edition makes an extraordinary contribution to the literature of public policy and political science. ...[T]his book provides invaluable insights for anyone interested in legislative initiatives, especially in domestic policy, but also in foreign affairs. In sum: an extraordinary achievement."

Graham Allison, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University "Using the past to illuminate the present, Ted Marmor has produced an elegant, precise, and scholarly accounting of Medicare's tangled politics. Appearing at the dawn of the new century, this is a wise and important book that will perform an invaluable service in helping America to confront its demographic future."

Finlay Lewis, Economics Correspondent, Copley News Service

This new edition makes an extraordinary contribution to the literature of public policy and political science. The four entirely new chapters provide more content than in any stand-alone book I know on the topics covered. By treating the politics of Medicare as an exemplary, major initiative in public policy, this book provides invaluable insights for anyone interested in legislative initiatives, especially in domestic policy, but also in foreign affairs. The final chapters reflections on puzzles and

patterns has even broader implications valuable to readers interested in state, local, and national governments, both foreign and American. In sum: an extraordinary achievement. -- Graham Allison, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University Scholars have long regarded the first edition of *The Politics of Medicare* as the definitive analysis of the political forces, interactions, and ideas that created Medicare. The second edition promises to assume the same stature as an analysis of the political evolution of Medicare since its inception. This book will be greatly appreciated by students of political science as a case study of the political structures, alignments, and ideologies that have shaped one of our government's largest and most popular social programs. It deserves a much wider audience, however, because it challenges many of the ideological assumptions that have supported proposals to reform Medicare over the past decade. By debunking these assumptions -- that Medicare could ever become insolvent or that it needs to be updated as a managed competition-based program, for example -- Ted Marmor succeeds not only in helping us understand where Medicare has come from, but also in illuminating where Medicare policy should be going. -- Timothy Stoltzfus Jost, Newton D. Baker Professor of Law and of Medicine and Public Health, Ohio State University Using the past to illuminate the present, Ted Marmor has produced an elegant, precise and scholarly accounting of Medicare's tangled politics. As usual, Marmor is on top of the news. Fresh struggles loom over not just health care for the elderly but over the role of medicine in society generally. Appearing at the dawn of new century, this is a wise and important book that will perform an invaluable service in helping America to confront its demographic future. -- Finlay Lewis, Economics Correspondent, Copley News Service --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Theodore R. Marmor's book, *The Politics of Medicare*, 1970, second edition, 2000, is in some ways complementary to Jonathan Oberlander's book, *The Political Life of Medicare*, 2003. Prof. Marmor, at Yale, supervised the graduate studies of Prof. Oberlander of the University of North Carolina. The Marmor book gives a briefer treatment of the political disputes over Medicare during the 1980s and 1990s but a fuller treatment of the development and enactment of Medicare. Both books consider the Clinton administration's attempt at health care reform in 1993 and 1994 and the Medicare cuts in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. Both stop short of prescription drug coverage in 2003 and Congressional postponements of Medicare cuts in 2003 through 2008 (once each), 2009 (twice) and 2010 (once so far). Neither book analyzes the arbitrary structure of the cuts nor predicts their postponement. Prof. Marmor explains Medicare, in comparison with other national health-care programs, through determination to structure earned benefits rather than social welfare: limited to people aged 65 and over but without a means test and financed by regressive payroll taxes. He

shows how critical features such as lack of cost controls were political adaptations. The primary architects, Rep. Wilbur Mills and Wilbur Cohen, later HEW Secretary, believed that use of payroll taxes rather than general revenue would counter inflationary pressures. Perhaps they did over some years, but Prof. Marmor shows that hospital charges, already rising rapidly, quickly took an even steeper course (Figure 6.1). Of interest in the aftermath of 2010 health-care reform is Prof. Marmor's picture of the months after Medicare enactment. He shows opponents failed to sustain their focus. Medical professionals became absorbed in details of organizing the program. That is unlikely to be the pattern for 2010, when implementation of care was largely delayed four years. Once again the structure of a health-care program was dominated by politics: the delay was critical to lower costs in early years, a concern without parallel in Medicare. Medical professionals became deeply concerned over pending cuts in payments, also without parallel. Political potentials following enactment of 2010 health-care reform therefore differ substantially from those in 1965. Other comparisons are noted by Don Wolfensberger, Health care reform and the Medicare analogy, Woodrow Wilson Center, September, 2009, at [...] Profs. Marmor and Oberlander also published an outline of recent prospects for health-care reform [Health reform: the fateful moment, New York Review, August, 2009, at [...]]. Perhaps after the many controversies over 2010 health-care reform settle, Prof. Marmor will write a sequel to his 1970 book, taking advantage of his deep knowledge about how Medicare developed and evolved.

A well written synopsis of the actors involved in the time leading up to the Passage of the medicare and medicaid acts. Great historical perspective and as it was written over 40 years ago it has lots of first hand insight and knowledge of the persons involved in the decision making

I find it very easy to operate and as commodity description. I am satisfied with it, I will recommend to friends! Special design, perfect quality, nice appearance. I couldn't deny such a good product. It's work properly, exactly according to the description. They are much prettier than I expected. I am very pleased and would definitely recommend this product! These are lovely!!

Have you ever wondered how Medicare--the federal health insurance program for the elderly and some disabled--became such a hot news topic, or why its administration and benefit package (the lack of outpatient drug coverage, for example) seems so inexplicable and byzantine? If so, Theodore Marmor's reissue and revision of *The Politics of Medicare* is the book you want to pick up. There is no comparable book of its kind. Other scholars have studied Medicare's origins. Journalists

trace the ebb and flow of contemporary Washington battles over Social Security and Medicare. But Marmor, a Yale professor and health policy guru, has written the definitive analysis of how the political battles waged over health insurance and Medicare from the 1940s onward powerfully shape the debate over the program to this day. Wondering why Medicare, unlike almost all major private insurance plans, fails to cover most prescription drugs? The seeds of an answer may be found in the fears of 1960s legislators that the unpredictable cost of drugs could swamp the program at its outset. Unsure why medical expenditures took off in the 1960s and 1970s? Partly because doctors, who had led the charge against a government-sponsored social insurance program for the aged, benefited enormously from generous rules that were designed to assuage their fears about participation. Puzzled how Medicare became such a political hot potato after years of uninterrupted popularity? Marmor deftly shows how the Reagan administration reoriented widely-held fears about medical inflation into narrower fears about the supposedly unsustainable cost of public programs. Another reason that this astute volume bears reading, or rereading: Marmor shows that elections can really matter. In the absence of the Democratic majority in Congress that emerged from the 1964 elections, passage of Medicare would have been delayed or forestalled altogether. Within the cozy world of health policy analysts, Marmor is known for being a staunch proponent of national health insurance and a skeptic about the potential of HMOs and different forms of "managed competition" to control health costs and delivery quality care. His convictions enliven the text rather than detracting from its rigorous logic. This is a book that anyone interested in the politics of health care, and in American politics in general, will appreciate. One thing alone mars this otherwise impressive book: its packaging. Sadly, any seven-year old with access to Microsoft Excel could have improved on the volume's rudimentary and unappealing charts and graphics. But the reader shouldn't let this superficial flaw detract from Marmor's important and unusually well-written book.

I have read two reviews of this book in odd places, both of which are highly favorable. According to John Glasel of the Musician's Union in NYC, Professor Marmor's 'perceptive work analyzes the partisan squabbling that has shaped Medicare over the years. The first part, a reprint of the first edition of this book, traces the history of the fight for government health insurance from the 1930s to the passage of Medicare in 1965. The book's second part, completely new in this edition, brings the history up to date. Many scholars, according to Glasel, have long considered the first edition of this book the "definitive work on the subject. Its new edition should now be accorded that distinction." I agree with that judgement very much. So does Jeff Levine of WebMD's Washington Bureau, who described *The Politics of Medicare* as "a book for serious students of public policy," one which does

not simply recite "historical facts" but analyzes the origins of Medicare and then, in a complex and thoughtful way, tells the story from 1965 to 1999.

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