

This is a printer friendly version of an article from the **The Greenville News**  
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

---

# Hospitals fear losses from Bush budget plan

Medicare savings could cost Greenville Hospital \$129 million over five years

Published: Saturday, February 16, 2008 - 2:00 am

By Doug Abrahms  
GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON -- Greenville Hospital System could lose \$129 million over the next five years under the budget proposed by the Bush administration, the hospital said Friday.

President Bush has proposed cutting \$182 billion from Medicare over five years. The biggest losers would be hospitals, and Greenville Hospital System estimates it would get \$11 million less in 2009 and \$129 million less over five years.

"This is a tremendous negative impact that could result in less services and programs being available to the community as well as impacting rates," said Susan Bichel, the Hospital System's chief financial officer.

Bon Secours St. Francis Health System in Greenville could not be reached for comment.

## Advertisement

U.S. hospitals would get \$64.2 billion less over five years under the Bush proposal, said Jeff Nelligan, spokesman for Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, in an effort to slow the growth of Medicare from 7.2 percent annually to 5 percent, he said.

Hospitals will still see increases in Medicare payments, but the rate of increases will slow, Nelligan said. Medicare spending grew from \$219 billion in 2000 to \$428 billion in 2007.

The current program threatens benefits and access, he said.

But the American Hospital Association estimated hospitals would lose \$137 billion over five years, and cuts would especially hit teaching hospitals and ones providing services to many low-income patients, said Rick Pollack, executive vice president.

"It would be devastating if this went through," he said. "Hospitals already are being paid less than the costs to provide services to Medicare patients."

Hospitals face increasing costs, from higher spending on medical technology to treating larger numbers of low-income patients who lack insurance, Pollack said. If Medicare pays hospitals less, those costs get shifted to insured patients.

Rep. Bob Inglis says the cuts are unlikely. "It's unreasonable to expect that we could have savings through a freeze to hospitals without affecting patient care."

Inglis agrees Medicare is growing too fast, but he favors structural changes to slow spending. Mitsubishi, which has a plant in Greer, changed its health-care plan to focus on preventive medicine, which stopped cost increases and improved the quality of care, Inglis said.

---