

## Medicare chief actuary warns Medicare Part A trust fund may be exhausted sooner than thought.

The [AP](#) (12/2, Freking) reports, "Federal health officials estimate that the struggling economy will speed up by one to three years the exhaustion of the Medicare trust fund covering hospital and nursing home care." Medicare's trustees "warned last March that the trust fund for Medicare Part A would become insolvent in 2019. But the chief actuary for Medicare," Richard Foster, "said Monday the economy will likely generate less revenue through payroll taxes than the trustees had projected." Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt "said that Foster's update reinforced his concern that too many people view Medicare's finances as one that is in the distant future." Leavitt said, "We're not talking about some future president. We may be talking about this one." In the last year, according to the AP, "Leavitt has frequently talked about Medicare drifting toward a financial disaster. He said Congress will be forced to take action by raising taxes, cutting benefits to seniors or reducing payment rates for healthcare providers."