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providing \$25 million per year to fight fraud and abuse in the program.

But Michael O. Leavitt, secretary of Health and Human Services, wrote committee leaders Tuesday that if the current measure were sent to the president, his senior advisers would recommend a veto.

Leavitt wrote that the subcommittee's changes "were merely cosmetic and do not alter our substantive opposition to the bill."

The measure, he said, "puts billions of dollars of federal funds at risk, and may turn back progress that has already been made to stop abusive state practices."

Governors say the new rules would unfairly shift costs for the services to the states, forcing them to either spend more money on Medicaid or eliminate services. The bill, sponsored by Rep. John D. Dingell, D-Mich., would postpone the regulations until April 2009, when a new president will be in office.

Medicaid is a joint state-federal program for the poor in which the federal government pays 57 percent of the costs — an estimated \$204 billion in fiscal 2008. There has long been tension between states and the federal government over who should bear more of the burden for the program.

Administration officials have previously said they strongly oppose the bill. But Joe L. Barton of Texas, the ranking Republican on Energy and Commerce, said April 9 that he had asked the White House not to veto the measure after Democrats agreed to amend it.

Other changes to the bill include language that would direct the secretary of Health and Human Services to contract with an outside group to examine the issues the regulations sought to address. That report would be due by March 2009.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the seven regulations together would save Medicaid about \$17.8 billion over five years, and Dingell's one-year delay would cost \$1.65 billion over two years. The cost of the bill would be offset by anticipated savings from a provision requiring electronic verification of the assets of people applying for Medicaid, and by borrowing money from the 2013 allocation to the Physician Quality Improvement Fund. ♦

The markup is scheduled for 1 p.m. Wednesday in 2123 Rayburn.