



The Daily Dish

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A Medicare scam could have cost the government billions. In a report from the [Washington Post](#), “Since 1999, Medicare has spent \$8.2 billion to procure power wheelchairs and ‘scooters’ for 2.7 million people. Today, the government cannot even guess at how much of that money was paid out to scammers.” Picking up seniors in groups and driving them to an exam, the scammers would have their doctor evaluate and then issue a prescription for a scooter, even if the patient didn’t want one.

Following the [controversial rule](#) on the EPA’s greenhouse gas regulation, natural gas companies fear that they will be the next target of sweeping EPA regulations. Speaking to [The Hill](#), Randy Albert, a former executive for Consol Energy Inc.’s natural gas business, said, “At some point they’re going to turn their crosshairs on the natural gas industry.” As [AAF has researched](#), rules like the greenhouse gas rule can cost billions, reduce jobs, and raise energy prices.

Eakinomics: The Jackson Hole Agenda

The annual Fed conference at Jackson Hole, Wyoming commences on August 21. Officially sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, the conference has been since 1978 the most important meeting of global central bankers. This year’s focus is “Re-Evaluating Labor Market Dynamics,” a key issue across the globe.

Central bankers hardly face uniform conditions. Europe faces the real threat of recession, with output declining in Germany and weakness across the continent. Will the European Central Bank be aggressive enough to soften to the downdrafts? In emerging markets like China, Brazil, and elsewhere growth continues, but at a distinctly weaker pace. Will those central banks pursue Fed-like attempts to stimulate growth? Or will they learn from the Fed’s lack of impact and keep a focus on stable monetary policy?

And whither the U.S. economy? 2014 was supposed to be the year that growth jumped north, but the acceleration has yet to appear. More recently, readings on the household sector have featured diminished confidence and weaker retail sales. Meanwhile, there has been a discernible pickup in inflation. Is the economy nearing conditions close to full resource utilization that might generate wage and price pressures? This is consistent with the school of thought that believes long-term unemployment and the decline in labor force participation are structural. The alternative is that labor force is more cyclical and will rise as the labor market tightens. The resolution to this debate will determine the pace at which the Fed shrinks its balance sheet and normalizes interest rates.

The Jackson Hole conference could not come at a more significant time for the global economic recovery.

From the Forum

[Regulation Review: Final Cooling Water Rule](#) by Sam Batkins, AAF Director of Regulatory Policy

[Week in Regulation](#) by Sam Batkins, AAF Director of Regulatory Policy