



Congressman

SHERROD BROWN

WORKING FOR YOU

Winter 2004

Dear Friend:

As 2004 draws to a close, I want to take a moment to wish you and your family a healthy and prosperous 2005. In this newsletter you will find information on issues of importance to families in the 13th Congressional District as well as an important questionnaire, with pre-paid return postage for your convenience.

It is an honor to serve you in Washington, and your input is vital to ensuring your values and concerns are heard in Congress. I welcome your ideas and look forward to learning more about what matters most to you.

In the upcoming 109th Congress, I will continue to fight in Washington on your behalf. There is likely to be lively debate in Congress on issues such as Social Security, trade policy, Medicare, and more.

I also invite you to visit my newly designed and expanded Web site. As always, it allows you to contact me directly, via e-mail. I welcome your comments and concerns and invite you to visit www.house.gov/sherrodbrown.

Best wishes in the new year,

Sherrod Brown

Help Available for Winter Heating Bills

As temperatures fall, Ohio families will start seeing their heating bills rise. A federal-state partnership can help Ohio's most vulnerable residents manage the cost of home heating.

Whether you rent or own your home – whether you use gas, electric, oil, or propane – the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) may be able to help you pay your family's heating bills. Another federal-state partnership can help you save money and energy by weatherizing your home.

LIHEAP helps more than 250,000 Ohio households every year. Individuals with incomes below \$14,000 may be eligible for energy assistance. For families of 6, the income cap is almost \$38,000. If your family has a low or moderate income, call the Ohio Home Energy Assistance Program, toll-free, at 1-800-282-0880 for more information.

Veterans Issues

On November 17, Congress passed, with my support, three important bills aimed at improving veterans' benefits: S. 2486, the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act; S. 2484, the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Personnel Enhancement Act; and H.R. 3936, the Veterans Health Programs Improvement Act.

The Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act enhances education, medical, and employment benefits for veterans and their families. It improves on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs under the Montgomery G.I. Bill, as well as other education benefits. It also strengthens re-employment laws and other financial and legal protections for veterans and military families, provides increased benefits to surviving spouses with children under 18, and substantially increases the VA home loan guaranty amount.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Personnel Enhancement Act improves pay for VA doctors and dentists. Improving their pay and providing bonuses improves the recruitment and retention of top quality doctors and dentists to care for the nation's sick and disabled veterans.

The Veterans Health Programs Improvement Act of 2004 increases funding for the homeless assistance program and eliminates veterans' co-payments for hospice care furnished by the VA. It also assists states in hiring and retaining nurses in state veterans' homes, and establishes a new pilot program to improve the recruitment of qualified nurses. These bills await the President's signature.

I am proud to have voted to improve the education, health care, and employment benefits that veterans receive. You can be sure I will continue to promote legislation to ensure our veterans receive the benefits and services they have earned with their service to our country.

See recent updates on my Website at:

www.house.gov/sherrodbrown

SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION

More Questions Than Answers

In November, President Bush renewed his call for Social Security privatization. But his announcement raised more questions than it answered.

The President has not said how his plan would work. A special presidential commission reported three years ago on several privatization alternatives. The President may be using one of them as a starting point, but he may be starting from scratch, and he has not yet said. Neither the White House nor the Social Security Administration has released a legislative proposal or a policy outline.

The President has not said how he would pay for his proposal. The costs of Social Security privatization are estimated at \$2 trillion. Republicans in Congress are reportedly considering a budget plan that would not address these costs. The President has not yet said whether he supports Congress' plan or another approach.

And the President has not said how his plan would protect workers' investments. In its nearly 75 years, Social Security has never failed to pay back even one dollar invested by an American worker. Yet The President has not explained how – or even if – his plan would protect workers from the dangers of a volatile stock market.

I will push on your behalf for answers to these questions so we can ensure a reasoned debate on this important issue in the upcoming Congress.

Common-sense Tax Reform

In last year's State of the Union address, President Bush said "We will not deny, we will not ignore, we will not pass along our problems to other Congresses, to other presidents and other generations."

But actions speak louder than words.

In 2001, the administration projected a 10-year \$5.6 trillion budget surplus. Today, we face a projected \$6 trillion budget deficit.

The 2004 federal budget deficit is a record-breaking \$422 billion, and the administration's tax changes account for \$241 billion, or nearly 60%, of that shortfall. These tax policies overwhelmingly benefit millionaires and billionaires.

The top 1% of Ohioans have incomes starting at around \$300,000 and averaging more than \$630,000. Those Ohioans will receive a tax cut of almost \$38,000 in 2004. But a middle-income Ohio family with an average income of \$35,000 will receive less than \$900, and nearly half of Ohio taxpayers will receive less than \$100.

The President has proposed, over the next decade, to spend the entire \$2.4 trillion Social Security surplus and the entire \$500 billion Medicare surplus. Since Social Security is financed by a payroll tax that applies only to earned income below \$87,000, the consequence of this proposal will be generations of low- and middle-income working families paying for tax policies that disproportionately benefit a privileged few.

Rather than trickle-down tax plans and borrow-and-spend fiscal policies, we need policies to reform America's tax law to benefit America's workers. I supported bipartisan legislation that would have used the tax code to reward companies that invest in America and employ U.S. workers. Though the White House and Republican congressional leaders blocked that plan in 2004, I will continue to work for common-sense tax reform that treats all American families fairly.

Study Shows Varying Benefits from Changes to Medicare

When the new Medicare Prescription Drug benefit goes into effect in January of 2006, it is estimated that two out of three beneficiaries will receive some benefit. The remaining beneficiaries will pay as much or more for drugs than they currently do, according to a recent study by the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

The study found that there are distinct winners and losers in the application of the new benefit. Low-income Americans stand to benefit the most—with an average reduction of 83% to their drug costs. Kaiser estimates that the poorest Americans would average about \$90 per year in drug spending.

Those who enroll in the new drug benefit but do not receive the low-income subsidies — an estimated 20.3 million people — are projected to pay on average 28 percent less out of pocket for their prescription drugs as a result of the new law, the analysis finds.

More than a third of those who enroll in the drug benefit will pay annual premiums expected to be around

\$420 and will realize no savings. For 7.5 million people, that is because they will spend little or no money on prescription medicines. But another 2.4 million could see significantly higher out-of-pocket costs because they are projected to lose more generous prescription drug coverage from their former employers, the report said.

It is important that all Medicare beneficiaries fully explore the options available to them as the new drug coverage is phased in. Those beneficiaries who have elected to purchase a Medicare Discount Card have the option of changing or renewing that card after January 1, 2005. Discount Cards for 2004, as well as the \$600 credit for low-income beneficiaries, are available through December 31.

For more information, please visit www.medicare.gov <<http://www.medicare.gov>>, or call the Department of Health and Human Services' Medicare hotline, 1-800-MEDICARE. As always, please don't hesitate to contact my office for assistance at 1-800-234-6413.



Congressional Issues Survey

- 1 . What do you think will do more to create jobs and stimulate the economy?
 - Tax cuts
 - Investments in rebuilding roads, bridges, schools, and other infrastructure
 - Other _____

- 2 . Is the USA Patriot Act necessary to protect the security of the United States?
 - Yes No Undecided

- 3 . Should the government set price controls for prescription drugs?
 - Yes No Undecided

- 4 . Should Americans be able to buy less expensive prescription drugs from Canada?
 - Yes No Undecided

- 5 . Do you believe the government should offer vouchers to enable children to attend private or religious school?
 - Yes No Undecided

- 6 . Do you support legislation recently passed by Congress to change Medicare and provide a private insurance prescription drug benefit?
 - Yes No Undecided

- 7 . Do you believe we should privatize Social Security by diverting dollars into individual investment accounts?
 - Yes No Undecided

- 8 . Do you support expanding free trade policies like NAFTA, WTO, and preferential status for China?
 - Yes No Undecided

- 9 . Do you believe all Americans should have access to affordable health care?
 - Yes No Undecided

If you would like to receive regular updates on these issues, please check the appropriate box below:

- Yes, I want to receive periodic updates by e-mail
- Yes, I want to receive periodic updates by regular mail

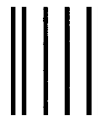
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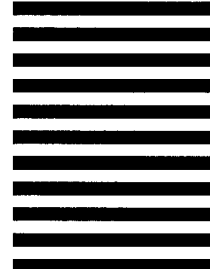
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www.house.gov/sherrodobrown



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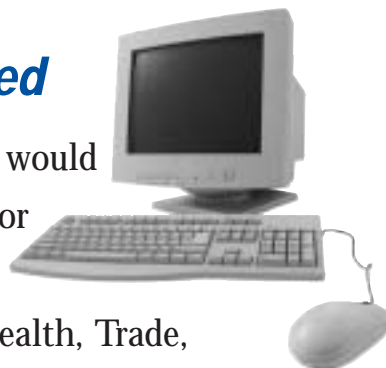
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Congressman Brown Wants to Keep You Informed

Congressman Brown provides e-mail updates on key issues. If you would like to receive e-mail updates on any subject, please call, write, or email Congressman Brown at Sherrod@mail.house.gov. Some of the most requested update topics include: Seniors, Veterans, Medicare, Health, Trade, Energy, Education, Taxes, and Labor.



it back—postage is already paid.

When you're done, fold it, tape it shut, and mail

Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey.

Congressional Issues Survey Enclosed

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