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# Congress of the United States

## U.S. House of Representatives

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February 11, 2004

### CONSERVATIVE NATIONAL TAXPAYERS UNION CALLS ON BUSH TO HALT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED MEDICARE AD CAMPAIGN *Administration Claims of Political "Sour Grapes" Unfounded*

Dear Colleague:

Republicans and the Bush Administration claim that critics of the \$23 million Medicare propaganda campaign are politically motivated by Democrats looking to win points with voters in the November election. This is entirely false. Even the conservative National Taxpayers Union has called for the termination of the Administration's campaign. From their February 5 letter:

*"Given that the heart of the new program doesn't begin until 2006, it is very hard to draw any conclusion about advertising this year other than that it is focused much more on the coming elections."*

A copy of the letter from the National Taxpayers Union to Secretary Thompson is attached.

Sincerely,



Charles B. Rangel  
Ranking Democrat



Pete Stark  
Ranking Democrat  
Subcommittee on Health



February 5, 2004

The Honorable Tommy Thompson  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson:

On behalf of the 350,000-member National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I write to request that the Bush Administration immediately terminate the planned \$12.6 million ad campaign on behalf of the forthcoming Medicare prescription drug benefit. We also ask you to cease all other publicly-funded expenditures on items such as mailings and meetings which seem to be little more than public relations efforts to build support for this expensive new program.

Given that the heart of the new program doesn't begin until 2006, it is very hard to draw any conclusion about advertising this year other than that it is focused much more on the coming elections. While your "Same Medicare. More Benefits" campaign may be welcomed by politicians running for election in 2004, we can see little public benefit from a campaign beginning two years prior to the commencement of prescription drug insurance.

Even when there is no election agenda, NTU and fiscal conservatives across the country deplore taxpayer-funded advertising promoting big government. The outrage is compounded by your Department's recent embarrassing admissions that the prescription drug program will cost far more than what was promised to the American public last fall. These revelations are no surprise to NTU or the 45 citizen, taxpayer, and conservative groups from around the country who joined us in opposing this measure. Our broad coalition repeatedly warned wavering Members of Congress that this would be the case (supporters, of course, assured otherwise). We believe these belated admissions of the true cost provide one more reason to shut down all HHS advertising efforts.

The Medicare prescription drug legislation has added trillions to the unfunded liabilities facing the nation. This \$12.6 million ad campaign, timed in accord with the 2004 elections rather than the start of the program, adds insult to injury, and we believe the American public would be best served by its immediate termination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Berthoud", is written over the typed name.

John Berthoud  
President

cc: All Members of the U.S. House and Senate