

# HOUSE PASSES PALLONE'S V.E.T.S. DAY



Throughout our nation's history, millions of men and women have fought on our behalf as members of the Armed Services. Hearing a veteran's personal story helps bring our history to life.

Last year, the House approved my resolution designating **Veterans Educate Today's Students (V.E.T.S.) Day**. The resolution encourages teachers to set aside a portion of a day in November to allow veterans to answer students' questions and share stories about their service.

At a time when our soldiers are once again in harms way, it is particularly important that young people are educated about the sacrifices these brave men and women make every day. I hope that by interacting with America's veterans, students will gain a greater appreciation for their contributions to our nation's history.



CONGRESSMAN

# Frank Pallone, Jr.

Representing the People of the Sixth District of New Jersey



## UPDATE FOR SENIORS

### Congress Overrides Bush Veto of Medicare Bill

For over four decades, traditional Medicare has been a reliable source of health care for our nation's seniors and disabled.

As the Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, I helped craft the **Medicare Improvements for Patients & Providers Act of 2008**, which strengthens Medicare for our elderly and disabled.

Congress passed the legislation earlier this summer, but President Bush vetoed the bill. For only the fourth time, Congress overrode the president's veto. The legislation is now law. It will help seniors access the care and treatment they need by:

- \* **Improving Coverage of Preventive Health Care:** To help seniors identify medical conditions or risk factors early, the law allows preventive services not currently covered by Medicare to be added to the program.
- \* **Making mental health care more affordable:** Medicare currently requires a 50 percent co-payment for mental health services as opposed to the 20 percent required for physical health services. This law provides parity in coverage for mental health services over six years.
- \* **Expanding direct assistance for Medicare beneficiaries:** In an effort to include more low- and middle-income seniors in Medicare Savings Programs (MSP), the new law increases the level of savings that MSP applicants may have and still qualify for help paying their premiums and co-payments.

The new law also prevented a planned 10.6 percent cut in payments to doctors from taking effect in July, so seniors will not have to worry that their doctor will drop out of the Medicare program.

By overriding the president's veto, Congress ensured New Jersey seniors will continue to have access to the medical care they need and deserve.



*Congressman Pallone talks with seniors about the new Medicare law that took effect in July.*



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Washington, D.C. 20515-3006

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Sixth Congressional District  
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## UPDATE FOR SENIORS

This mailing was prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense.

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

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## Pallone's Senior Falls Act Signed into Law

With more than 20,000 elderly New Jerseyans living in nursing homes as a result of geriatric falls, it is clear we must do a better job of informing and educating seniors about how best to prevent such debilitating falls.

In April, **The Safety of Seniors Act**, which I wrote, was signed into law by President Bush. The new law launches a comprehensive preventive care program to reduce the number and severity of falls to the elderly.

### The new law directs the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to:

- \* Award federal grants for local and state education campaigns;
- \* Support national education campaigns focused on reducing and preventing falls and on educating health professionals about fall risk, assessment and prevention; and
- \* Conduct research concerning approaches to reduce falls among high-risk adults living in long-term care facilities and strategies for in-home modifications.

Effective demonstration tests, comprehensive public information and education campaigns are imperative to reducing and mitigating these avoidable and frequently disabling injuries.



*Congressman Pallone talks with seniors about health care concerns.*

### Helpful Tips to Reduce Your Risk of Falling

- ✓ **Exercise regularly to increase strength and improve balance.**
- ✓ **Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medicine to reduce side effects and interactions.**
- ✓ **Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year.**
- ✓ **Improve the lighting in your home.**
- ✓ **Reduce hazards in your home that can lead to falls.**

## Be Ready For Digital Television

Next year, our nation will undergo one of the most significant technological changes in history: the transition to digital television. On February 17, 2009 television broadcasters will begin airing exclusively digital signals, making analog television sets that are not connected to a converter box, cable or satellite obsolete.

The digital television transition will create more free broadcast television channels, clearer images and enhanced sound quality. Specific channels have also been set aside for public safety communications, a key recommendation of the 9/11 Commission.

Consumers need to begin preparing for this important change now. In New Jersey, over 86,000 households receive their television signal over the air and could be affected by the transition. These families need to start planning soon so they can avoid potential problems or any confusion next February.

Families who receive their television signal over the air, using a traditional rooftop antenna or "rabbit ears," will have to acquire a new "digital to analog" converter box to ensure that their television sets can display the new digital signals. These boxes range in cost from \$40 to \$80.

The U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has set up a program to help consumers defray the cost of converter boxes. Every household affected by the transition is eligible for two \$40 coupons to be used toward the purchase of a converter box.

**For more information about the digital transition, call 1-888-CALL-FCC or visit <http://www.dtv.gov>**  
**To order a converter box coupon call 1-888-DTV-2009 or go to <http://www.dtv2009.gov>**

## Are You Eligible for an Economic Stimulus Check?

Earlier this year, Congress passed the **Economic Stimulus Act of 2008** to help boost the economy and provide financial relief to seniors and middle-class families.

Individuals who do not file a tax return, but received at least \$3,000 in Social Security benefits, veteran's benefits, certain railroad retirement benefits and/or earned income in 2007, must submit a simplified version of a 1040A tax form to the IRS in order to receive a stimulus payment.

The minimum payment for this group will be \$300 for an individual and \$600 for a couple filing jointly. You have until October 15, 2008 to apply for an economic stimulus payment.

