

CONGRESSMAN
**FRANK
PALLONE**



Reports to Seniors

Discount Drug Cards; Buyer Beware

Last year, I opposed a prescription drug bill that attempts to weaken the Medicare program and falls short of meeting the prescription drug needs of seniors. While the new law doesn't go into effect until 2006, this June the Administration began providing interested seniors a discount drug card. Seniors need to beware before signing up.

Are Discount Cards Worth It?

Despite their name, there's no guarantee these cards are a good deal for seniors. Like the new prescription drug benefit, the big drug and insurance companies, not Medicare, are in charge of the new cards and determine how much seniors pay.

Seniors expecting real discounts may be disappointed because there's no requirement for a minimum discount or a guarantee that seniors will save. In fact, many drug companies actually increased their prices prior to June, so the discounts they offered would not cut into their bottom line.

The new cards limit seniors choices by forcing them to choose only one card and locking them into that card for a year. On the other hand, the big drug companies can change their discounts weekly. Seniors who sign up for a card because it discounts the medication their doctor has prescribed will be left with no recourse if the card suddenly changes the discount or drops the drug.

Should You Sign Up?

With all of these flaws and pitfalls, seniors who are considering signing up for this card should carefully consider their options. If you need help figuring out which prescription drug discount card – if any – is right for you, I urge you to call my district office or 1-800-MEDICARE or visit <http://www.medicare.gov>

Know the facts about the new discount cards:

- ▲ Locked into one card for a year
- ▲ Companies can change their prices weekly
- ▲ No guarantee you will get a discount on your medicines
- ▲ No guaranteed access to your pharmacy
- ▲ Prices vary by pharmacy

Repeal and Replace Prescription Drug Law

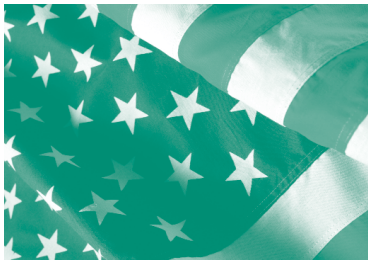
The only way seniors will truly receive significant assistance is if Congress repeals the Republican law and replaces it with a real prescription drug benefit within Medicare. Under a Democratic plan that I helped draft, seniors would receive a substantial defined benefit within Medicare

that would also give them the ability to obtain any drug their doctor says they need at reduced prices from the pharmacy of their choice. I'll continue to fight to make this legislation the law of the land.



Pallone, right, holds a town hall forum with seniors to discuss the new prescription drug law.

Keeping Our Promise to Veterans



America's veterans fought for our freedom at home and abroad. Now, they deserve reliable and adequate healthcare and retirement benefits.

Unfortunately, more than 30,000 veterans are waiting six months or more for an appointment at VA hospitals, and more veterans are coming home every week from Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Despite these increases, the House Republican budget is \$1 billion short of what the VA needs to provide its current

services. To make matters worse, the Bush administration announced its intention to cut another \$910 million from veterans' healthcare services. These drastic cuts would lead to reductions in health benefits and even longer delays.

Veterans programs should not be subject to budget battles in Congress. That's why I support a proposal to automatically adjust funding based on inflation and any fluctuation in the number of veterans. This proposal would prevent funding gaps so veterans no longer face delays in services.

I've also cosponsored legislation to allow disabled military retirees to receive both military retired pay and disability compensation. Currently, military retirees are required to pay for their own disabilities because every dollar of disability compensation they receive is deducted from their military retirement pay. No other category of federal employee is subject to this kind of unfairness and this injustice needs to be immediately reversed.

Ensuring Access to Rehabilitative Care

New Jersey's rehabilitation hospitals provide seniors with critical rehabilitative care. However, a new Medicare rule imposed by the Bush Administration means that some seniors will no longer qualify to receive care at these hospitals.

The new rule recalculates who qualifies for care and affects almost all cardiac, hip and knee replacement patients, as well as some stroke, spinal cord and brain-injured patients. New Jersey's inpatient rehabilitation hospitals estimate they will see a 50 to 75 percent drop in patients, which could mean a reduction in services for patients and the possibility that rehabilitation hospitals will be forced to close their doors.

I am working to reverse this ill-advised rule and ensure that New Jersey's seniors continue to have access to comprehensive rehabilitation care.

Rep. Pallone's District Offices – Reaching Out to You

If you have a problem of a federal nature or want to obtain information on legislative issues, contact these offices, open weekdays 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Middlesex/Somerset/Union

67/69 Church St., Kilmer Square
New Brunswick 08901
732-249-8892

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Official Business



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PRSRT STD