



# Congressman Gene Green Reports

Dear Friend,

Our spring newsletter highlights topics for veterans and seniors, and this edition's articles cover the latest on Social Security, Medicare, and Veterans' issues.

In the district, we are looking forward to having our annual Veterans Forum on Saturday, May 12th, our East Side Job Fair on Monday, May 14th, and our Annual Citizenship Day on Saturday, June 23rd. We will also have additional town hall meetings in August and early September, which will be announced later.

I come home every weekend from Washington to work in our district and you don't have to wait for a town hall meeting to reach me. Please contact me at either of our local offices, email, or mail me your thoughts and concerns.

Thank you for your confidence and let us know how we can help you.

Sincerely,

Gene Green  
Member of Congress

## Improvements in Medicare

For more than 40 years, Medicare has offered critical health and financial stability for senior citizens by providing coverage for over 45 million individuals. The Affordable Care Act contains substantial payment and delivery system reforms that reward efficient delivery of quality care and changes the incentives in today's health care system to encourage value instead of simply volume. It makes investments that will enable beneficiaries to continue to access high-quality, affordable care, while encouraging prevention and care coordination for those with chronic conditions.

Seniors have seen immediate relief from high prescription prices with a \$250 rebate for Medicare beneficiaries who are in the "donut hole". Health reform began to close the donut hole in Part D in 2011 and closes the donut hole completely by 2020. Drug manufacturers also began providing a 50 percent discount on brand-name drugs in the donut hole to reduce costs in 2011 and will continue to do so through the phase-out. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, in 2011, the 210,763 residents of Texas who hit the donut hole saved an average of \$639 on the cost of their prescription drugs thanks to the Affordable Care Act.

Individuals participating in Medicare Advantage plans have also benefited from the Affordable Care Act. Medicare Advantage premiums have fallen by 7 percent on average and enrollment has risen by about 10 percent since this time last year. Average premiums have fallen from \$33.97 in 2011 to \$31.54 in 2012, while enrollment has risen from 11.7 million in 2011 to 12.8 million in 2012. Since 2010, when the Affordable Care Act was passed, Medicare Advantage premiums have fallen by 16 percent and enrollment has climbed by 17 percent.

*(Improvements in Medicare continued...)*

## Upcoming Events

### Veterans Forum

Saturday, May 12  
9:00 am

VFW Post 581  
27 Farrell Street  
Houston, 77022

### 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Eastside Job Fair

Monday, May 14  
9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Jacinto City Town Center  
1025 Oates Road  
Houston, 77029

### E-waste Collection Drive

Saturday, May 19  
9:00 am - 1:00 pm

*(Location to be announced)*

### Citizenship Day

Saturday, June 23  
8:00 am - 2:00 pm

Houston Community  
College Northline Campus  
8001 Fulton Street  
Houston, 77022



**Congressman Green stands with Andrew Ortega, a student from the 29th District, and his proud parents. Andrew received a nomination from our office and was accepted to West Point Military Academy.**

*(Improvements in Medicare continued...)*

Savings for individuals with Medicare will increase over time and, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the average person with Medicare will save nearly \$4,200 by 2021 because of the new law. The savings are a product of provisions in the Affordable Care Act and other cost trends that:

- Decrease prescription drug costs for seniors
- Make preventive services like mammograms free for everyone in Medicare
- Reduce growth in Part B premiums (for physician services)
- Reduce growth in cost-sharing under both Parts A (hospital care) and Part B

These efforts will help modernize the program and strengthen Medicare's financial health, protecting both beneficiaries and taxpayers, as well as extend the solubility of the program for an additional 12 years.

## **Continuing Benefits of the Affordable Care Act**

The Affordable Care Act became law 2 years ago, and Americans across the United States have become protected from the worst abuses of the insurance industry under a Patient's Bill of Rights, which bans insurance companies from dropping your coverage if you become sick, or placing an unreasonably low annual limit on your coverage, or increasing premiums more than 10% without publicly publishing justifications that must be approved by outside experts.

The law has also allowed more than 22 million seniors to get free preventive services without being charged for the Part B coinsurance or deductible. This includes 1.9 million who have taken advantage of the new free Annual Wellness Visit.

This year, the Affordable Care Act will implement measures that aim to improve the quality of healthcare and lower costs to save taxpayer dollars:

### **Linking Payment to Quality Outcomes**

Hospitals receiving payments from Traditional Medicare will be able to enroll in a Value-Based Purchasing program (VBP) which will offer financial incentives to hospitals to improve the quality of care they provide. To be eligible, the hospital will have to publicly report their performance, such as measures relating to heart attacks, surgical care, healthcare-associated infections, and patients' perception of care (Effective October 1, 2012).

### **Encouraging Integrated Health Systems**

Physicians are incentivized to join together to form "Accountable Care Organizations" (ACOs) to provide high quality, integrated care and reduce costs to the health care system. By helping to prevent disease and illness and reduce unnecessary hospital admissions, they will be able to keep some of the money that they have helped save (Effective January 1, 2012).

### **Reducing Paperwork and Administrative Costs**

Health care remains one of the few industries that still rely on paper records. The new law will institute a series of changes to standardize billing and requires health plans to begin adopting and implementing rules for the secure, confidential, electronic exchange of health information. Using electronic health records will reduce paperwork and administrative burdens, cut costs, and reduce medical errors. All electronic records will still be protected under privacy laws, just as paper records are today (Effective October 1, 2012).

## **10<sup>th</sup> Annual Eastside Job Fair**

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**Monday, May 14  
9:00 am - 1:00 pm**

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Jacinto City Town Center  
1025 Oates Rd.  
Houston, 77029

Job creation and getting Americans back to work is an immediate priority. Please join me to hear more about these issues and meet with representatives from dozens of local businesses that are looking to currently hire. There will also be resume critiquing and interview assistance available. For more information, please contact our office at 281-999-5879. Please dress professionally and bring copies of your resume.

## Veterans Update

Supporting our veterans is one of the most important priorities I have. Veterans and their loved ones are duly owed for protecting our lives and liberty. As a new generation of heroes return from Iraq and Afghanistan, it is the responsibility of our government to care for the men and women who bravely served our country. This is also true for our earlier heroes who fought in Europe, the Pacific, Korea, and Vietnam.

For this reason, I strongly supported the VOW (Veterans Opportunity to Work) to Hire Heroes Act (H.R. 674), which was signed into law last November. This law will help thousands of returning and older veterans with education, work training, and employment opportunities. This includes the Returning Heroes Tax Credit, which will credit employers up to \$2,400 in wages for short-term unemployed veterans and up to \$9,600 for long-term unemployed veterans. The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs estimates that this law will also provide nearly 100,000 unemployed veterans of past wars with up to one year of additional Montgomery GI Bill benefits to qualify for jobs in high-demand sectors, and ease the transition for veterans to apply for civil service jobs.

Other bills that I have cosponsored that would benefit veterans include:

### **Retired Pay Restoration Act (HR 303)**

This bill would amend current law to allow retired members of the armed forces to receive both veterans' service-connected disability compensation and military retirement pay. I am proud to be among the 74 cosponsors of this legislation since it is so crucial to the livelihood of retired veterans who were injured while fighting for the liberties we are fortunate to enjoy today.

### **Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act (HR 1092)**

The Defense Department, which has long pushed for increases in TRICARE fees and co-payments, recently announced that it will increase the fees for TRICARE Prime enrollees. On October 1, 2012, the annual enrollment fees for TRICARE Prime enrollees are scheduled to increase to \$260 (from \$230) for individuals and to \$520 (from \$460) for families of working-age retirees. I am opposed to these increases and have cosponsored legislation in Congress that would prohibit the increase of TRICARE co-pays, premiums, and prescription drug benefits for military retirees without Congressional approval. It would be immoral to balance our national budget on the backs of America's military retirees and their families.

### **Homes for Heroes Act of 2011 (HR 287)**

I am a cosponsor of the Homes for Heroes Act which would create a job position within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to specifically help veterans with housing needs. The role of this job would be to ensure veteran access to HUD housing and homeless assistance programs, and serve as a liaison with the Department of Veterans Affairs to streamline these operations. Financial assistance would also be provided to nonprofit organizations to expand the number of housing options for low-income veteran families. Since HUD housing is often based on income levels, veterans' benefits would not be included in formulas to determine the amount of housing assistance.

*If you need personal assistance with a problem you are having with the VA or other veterans' benefits issue, please contact our office at (281) 999-5879 or (713) 330-0761, and our staff will gladly see if we can resolve it or get answers to your situation.*



**Congressman Green stands with Leonard "Sarge" Lisovicz, a constituent who was presented with the "French Legion of Honor" medal for his service during WWII. Sarge was also presented a flag that was flown over the U.S. Capitol.**

## Veterans Forum

**Saturday, May 12  
9:00 am.**

VFW Post 581  
27 Farrell St.  
Houston, 77022

Veterans and their families are invited to join Congressman Green as he hosts an informative discussion on veterans' legislation and program updates. Various service-related organizations will also be present to provide information about veterans support services.

## Preserving Social Security

Created during the worst of the Great Depression, Social Security has invested and sustained three generations, providing security and peace of mind to millions of retirees, widows, and disabled Americans.

Last October, for the first time in three years, the Social Security Administration (SSA) announced that it would provide a cost of living adjustment (COLA) increase of 3.6 percent. I welcomed this decision. Social Security is a vital source of income for the 85,000-plus recipients in our district.

The reality is that our nation can do better. The formula that determines if a recipient's Social Security benefit should be increased is inaccurate and outdated. I have been one of the strongest voices in Congress for the SSA to adopt a formula that would accurately reflect the inflation experienced by retirees. Seniors should not have to wait three years to have an increase in benefits while the costs of gas, food, and health care continue to climb.

I know that many in our district are concerned about Social Security's solvency, and I am too. In its annual report to Congress last year, the Social Security Board of Trustees announced that the program would be able to pay all of its obligations for the next quarter century. At that point, without any changes in the program, Social Security would still be able to meet the vast majority of its obligations, but not all.

Social Security needs to be strengthened, not privatized or dismantled, because it is so vital to retirement security. I believe Congress should work together on a bipartisan basis to do everything we can to make reforms to Social Security so the program can meet its obligations to all Americans, young and old, working and retired, for generations to come.

## Contact Us

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Congressman Green speaks with constituents at the Senior Citizens Issues Forum, a town hall specialized for seniors. Congressman Green gave a legislative update and representatives from various government agencies were present to give information on services for seniors.

## E-waste Collection Drive

**Saturday, May 19**  
**9:00 am - 1:00 pm**

*(Location to be announced)*  
Please call our local office or  
visit our website for updates

Congressman Green and City Councilman Ed Gonzalez invite you to join our efforts to recycle responsibly and keep jobs at home by bringing your old or unwanted electronics to our electronic-waste drive. We will be accepting electronic items like computers, TV's, DVD players, cell phones, fax machines, and microwaves. You will also be able to recycle car batteries, oil, paint, and anti-freeze at our event. Congressman Green will also speak about H.R. 2284, "The Responsible Electronics Recycling Act."