

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 4, 2004

Secretary Tommy Thompson
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Thompson,

We were recently informed of the Administration's plans to "educate" beneficiaries about the Medicare law that was passed last November. As Ranking Members of the House Committees and Subcommittees with oversight responsibility for the Medicare program, we are eager to learn more about this effort.

Objective information is particularly important in light of the bewildering array of decisions beneficiaries will face as a result of the new law. However, we question the wisdom of conducting any promotional activities for the benefit this year – more than a year before the benefit begins. Doing so may contribute to beneficiary confusion on these issues. Moreover, we are particularly concerned about the objectivity of this campaign after having viewed one broadcast ad which incorrectly states that, "It's the same Medicare you've always counted on, plus more benefits like prescription drug coverage." As you are aware, it will not be the same Medicare. The Part B deductible will increase, premiums will be much higher for those with incomes over \$80,000 a year, and seniors will have to drop their Medigap drug policies if they want to enroll in the benefit. In addition, dual eligibles do not have a choice with respect as to whether their drug coverage will come from Medicaid, as it does today, or the new program, under which cost-sharing will increase in many states. Finally, it is broadly known that the bill will accelerate the erosion and elimination of retiree coverage, which will involuntarily change benefits for those with retiree coverage as well.

Therefore, please provide us immediately with the following information, including the Spanish language versions where applicable:

- Copies of the print ads and direct mail piece(s)
- Copies of the broadcast ads
- The script for the broadcast ads
- Placement, schedule and cost of the broadcast ads for television and radio

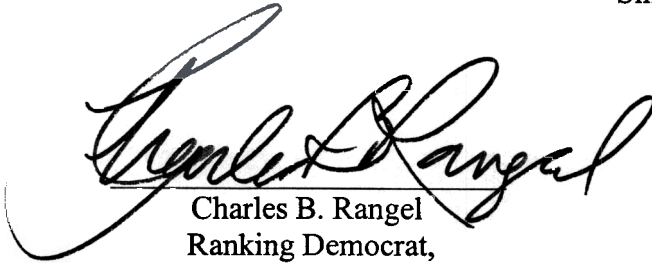
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In addition, please provide all memoranda, including e-mails, surveys, analyses, and drafts relating to the development of these materials.

Objectivity is essential so that beneficiaries are fairly informed of their options and have the necessary, unbiased information to make sound choices. Taxpayer funds should not be used to wage an ideological or political campaign.

We look forward to your response.

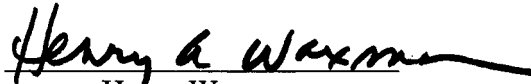
Sincerely,



Charles B. Rangel
Ranking Democrat,
Committee on
Ways and Means



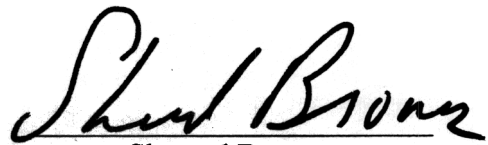
John D. Dingell
Ranking Democrat,
Committee on
Energy and Commerce



Henry Waxman
Ranking Democrat,
Committee on Government Reform



Pete Stark
Ranking Democrat,
Subcommittee on Health,
Committee on
Ways and Means



Sherrod Brown
Ranking Democrat,
Subcommittee on Health,
Committee on
Energy and Commerce