

Spring 2006 Medicare Update

Understanding the new Medicare Prescription Drug program can be confusing. That is why over the last several months I have been active throughout the 3rd district providing seniors with seminars to explain the new Medicare drug plan.

Although the law that created this program is far from perfect, it will provide help to thousands of seniors who currently receive no assistance with their medications.

That being said, people need to be armed with the information necessary to make the best decision about whether to join and - if so - which plan may best meet their needs.

Whether you are a senior, a person with a disability or someone trying to help a parent or friend, I encourage you to carefully research the available options BEFORE making a choice. Most people have until May 15th, 2006 to sign up for a plan before late enrollment penalties apply, so take your time, check your facts and know your options.

In Washington, D.C. I am working to extend the enrollment date. Simply, May 15th is not enough time to review and understand all the complexities of the prescription drug programs.

MEDICARE DRUG PLAN RESOURCES

Medicare: <http://medicare.gov/>

Social Security: <http://www.ssa.gov/prescriptionhelp>

SHIPs: http://www.idfpr.com/DOI/Ship/ship_help.asp

[Click here to Calculate Your Costs Under the New Medicare Prescription Drug Program](#)

[Click here for information on finding a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan that works for you.](#)

[Beware of a Medicare Phone Scam](#)

[Already Enrolled in a New Medicare Prescription Drug Plan and have questions? - Help Is Here](#)

[Click here to learn about the Medicare program in general.](#)

January 1, 2006:

The first day senior's could use Medicare's new drug coverage, if they had already joined a plan.

May 15, 2006:

Currently the last day seniors can join a Medicare drug plan without paying a penalty and the last day to enroll to receive any benefits in 2006.

Seniors who have not signed up for Medicare Part D by May 15th will pay a penalty - the Bush Rx drug tax - for the rest of their lives.

Organizations that can help:

- Senior Health Insurance Program
(SHIP): 1-800-548-9034
- Medicare: 1-800-MEDICARE (633-4227)
- Social Security Administration:
1-800-772-1213

Have the following information with you when you call:

- Medicare identification number (on your Medicare card)
- Drugs you currently take, the dosage and what you pay for them
- Your refill schedule and preferred method of receiving prescriptions (at the pharmacy or via mail-order)

Your annual income, and a basic accounting of your personal assets in case you qualify for low-income assistance