

MEDICARE

Medicare is a cornerstone of our health care system. We must protect it for future generations while making it more efficient and stable in the long term. This year Congress passed a crucial piece of legislation to strengthen Medicare: The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (MIPPA). This bill prevented a sharp reduction in the access seniors have to care by avoiding a cut of over 10 percent to physician payments. It also included a number of key provisions to preserve and expand services. For more information on the provisions of this bill see this section-by-section summary.

I was not a supporter of President Bush's Medicare prescription drug program (Part D) when it was passed. And, I still believe the program has major flaws. But, we can make vast improvements that will lead to reduced costs and greater access to pharmaceutical drugs. We should allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate the price of prescription drugs. Using the strong bargaining position of the federal government, just as we do in the Veterans Administration, we can ensure the lowest price of pharmaceuticals for beneficiaries. We should reform the program to get rid of the "doughnut hole" which has kept thousands of seniors from getting the prescription drugs they need. For more information on Medicare Part D, please see my Prescription Drugs page.

Here are some of the bills that I have cosponsored or voted for in the 110th Congress to strengthen Medicare:

H.R. 4: Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007 (passed the House on January 12, 2007): This legislation allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate down the price of prescription drugs in the Medicare Part D Program.

H.R. 6600: Medicare Identity Theft Prevention Act of 2008 (passed the House on September 29, 2008): To protect the identities of Medicare beneficiaries, this legislation requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop a mechanism to remove Social Security numbers from Medicare cards.

H.R. 6966: Safeguarding Our Hospitals Futures' Act of 2008 (introduced September 18, 2008): I sponsored this legislation to reverse a severe cut to hospital payments in a number of states including Connecticut.

For more information on Medicare, please see:

House Ways and Means Committee: H.R. 6331: The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008
Section by Section Summary

CRS Report: The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008

CRS Report: Medicare: A Primer

CRS Report: Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Benefit: A Primer

Larson statement on H.R. 4, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007