



Champaign County Health Care Consumers

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Media Advisory

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Medicare Task Force Delivers Empty Pill Bottles and Appeal for Help to U.S. Rep. Tim Johnson Over Closing of Part D Enrollment Period

Empty Pill Bottles Represent Unfilled Promises and Unmet Needs

Will call on Congressman Johnson to meet with Task Force and support legislation to eliminate Part D financial penalty so Illinois Medicare Beneficiaries will not suffer financial ruin

On Thursday, May 18, 2006 at 12:00pm, members of the local Medicare Task Force will gather at U.S. Rep. Tim Johnson's office to deliver dozens of empty pill bottles and a written request for a meeting with Rep. Johnson. Medicare Task Force members want Rep. Johnson to follow through on a pledge he made at an earlier meeting to do what he could to extend the Part D enrollment deadline.

Part D Enrollment Deadline: May 15 midnight marked the end of open enrollment for seniors and people with disabilities to sign up for the problematic Part D prescription drug program, and Medicare beneficiaries who did not sign up will now suffer significant financial penalties. If the enrollment period is not reopened, Illinois Medicare beneficiaries who have to enroll in Part D to get drug coverage will not be able to enroll until November 15, 2006 at the earliest – and will face a seven percent penalty on their premiums each month thereafter *for the rest of their lives.*

Rep. Johnson's Pledge to Medicare Task Force: The Medicare Task Force met with Representative Johnson on March 20, 2006 and delivered the petitions with hundreds of signatures in support of HR 3861/SB1841, the Medicare Informed Choice Act of 2005. After being presented with the petitions, Rep. Johnson stated that he would support extending the enrollment deadline. The Task Force naturally concluded that Rep. Johnson's pledge to support extending the enrollment deadline was related to the legislation the Task Force members had just presented. Surprisingly, this was not the case. When the deadline came, Rep. Johnson's support of extending the enrollment deadline never materialized. He did not sign the discharge petition that would have ensured the legislation to extend the enrollment deadline would come up for a vote in the House. Instead Rep. Johnson's staff is quoted in the News Gazette on May 10 saying, "Johnson was willing to support extending the enrollment deadline for a month or so" – though no legislation existed to extend the deadline "for a month or so."

Who: Medicare Task Force Members, Seniors, Concerned Citizens

What: Event to Deliver Empty Pill Bottles and Plea for Help to Rep. Tim Johnson over Closing Part D Enrollment Period

When: Thursday, May 18, 2006 at 12:00 PM

Where: Rep. Tim Johnson's local office - 2004 Fox Drive, Champaign IL

Visuals: Empty Pill Bottles, Signs

The Medicare Task Force has been leading the effort in Illinois to fix Part D along with its state and national partners, Citizen Action IL and Americans United. The Medicare Task Force has called on President Bush and Congress to take up legislation to make Part D simple, affordable, and guaranteed.