



News from Congressman Adam Smith

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SMITH INTRODUCES MODERATE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN WITH GROUP OF CENTRIST DEMOCRATS

WASHINGTON, DC — Congressman Adam Smith (D-Wash.) today joined 17 other moderate Democrats to introduce a bill to deliver affordable, universal prescription drug coverage for all seniors. The group hopes the bill, the Medicare Rx Now Act of 2003, will be permitted as the Democratic substitute to the Republican bill when it comes to the floor.

“I am proud to be part of the group introducing an affordable prescription drug benefit that provides coverage to the people who need the most help, that is fiscally responsible and permits coverage to go uninterrupted,” said Smith. “I know how important it is that seniors have access to the medicines they need to stay healthy.

“Back in Washington state, I hear constantly from seniors who can’t afford to take the drugs their doctors prescribe and they’re asking for our help now,” continued Smith. “This centrist proposal provides a drug benefit right now to those seniors most in need – those with high drug expenditures and low-income seniors.”

The Medicare Rx Now Act of 2003 provides a prescription drug benefit within existing Medicare Part B coverage by offering universal benefits through an enhanced drug benefit for beneficiaries with more than \$4,000 in total drug costs (rather than out-of-pocket expenses), a benefit for low-income seniors with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level and the use of Medicare-approved prescription drug card plans. The plan delivers universal eligibility for all Medicare Part B recipients and does not increase premiums. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated the cost of this proposal at under \$400 billion.

“This is a plan we can enact now to help seniors now –without fear of forcing seniors out of their coverage and out of their family doctor’s office, without fear of breaking the bank, and without fear of forcing seniors to continue to choose between basic life expenses and their health,” argued Smith. “We’ve been debating this issue for six years in Congress, and it’s high time we got a common sense, affordable, passable plan on the table as a first step towards a larger solution. Our bill helps hard-hit seniors now.”

Without invoking government-mandated price controls on prescription drugs, the Medicare Rx Now Act of 2003 utilizes purchasing power and competition to keep drugs affordable, both for seniors’ out of pocket costs and for the Medicare program in covering the drugs. Pooling Medicare recipients and allowing several prescription drug plans to compete for their business will help keep costs down. This plan offers Medicare-approved prescription drug card plans for all Americans – helping all Americans keep drug costs down.

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