A Personal Message from Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart

Dear Friend,

The focus in Washington right now is on terrorism and foreign policy issues, but I have not forgotten prescription drug coverage for seniors.

The continuing terrorist threat against our country, illustrated by the arrest of a man for planning a "dirty bomb" attack, the conflict with Iraq, and other foreign crises have dominated the news in recent weeks with good reason. Those and other dangerous situations deserve the serious attention of President Bush and those of us in Congress.

At the same time, we also have some major domestic concerns. Among the main ones, in my opinion, are Medicare and a prescription drug benefit. If you are a senior citizen, you depend on Medicare and you need to have assurance that it will be there for you. More and more medical conditions are being treated with prescription drugs. Currently, Medicare does not provide prescription drug coverage, but I am working to provide it for you.

The plan we passed in the House starts with a few common sense principles. First, we need lower drug costs now. Secondly, we need to provide guaranteed coverage for all seniors. Thirdly, this plan needs to be permanent, not end in five years as in the Democrats' version.

Another major feature of this plan is that it protects seniors from unforeseen runaway drug costs, giving you the peace of mind to know that you are covered even if catastrophic illness hits. This plan also is voluntary and gives you a choice of coverages. Finally, our plan provides substantial subsidies for low-income seniors. This is particularly beneficial for women, who make up two-thirds of low-income Medicare recipients.

This prescription drug plan, which is supported by President Bush, gives seniors the support they need when faced with high drug costs. Importantly, all seniors on Medicare will be covered.

Please read the additional information on this drug plan. Some of the details may change but this gives you a good idea of what the final plan will look like. It is a plan that will permit seniors to live with dignity, security and, independence.

As always, I appreciate hearing your views on this drug plan or any other issue.

Cordially,

Lincoln Diaz-Balart

Summary of House-Passed Prescription Drug Plan

Voluntary-ALL Are Covered

- All on Medicare are covered.
- If you like your present drug plan, you can keep it.
- Employers are encouraged to continue to offer retiree drug coverage by receiving funding assistance.

Proposed Benefits

- $250 deductible
- $251 to $1,000: 80% coverage, you pay 20%
- $1001 to $2,000: 50% coverage, you pay 50%
- Catastrophic Protection (all out-of-pocket costs above $3,700 covered 100%)
- Premium of approximately $35 per month or a little more than $1 per day
- Front-end benefit helps more seniors since 64% spend less than $2,000 annualy on drugs.

Extra Assistance for Low-Income Seniors

- **If you make under $13,290 (or $17,910 for a couple) you will pay no more than $5.00 per prescription for drugs.**
- Also, if you are the only family wage earner, and you currently make $13,290 to $15,505, you will only have to pay a small portion of the $35 per month premium.

You Have A Choice!

- Guaranteed choice of at least two plans.
- You can choose to keep your present drug-benefit
- You can choose a plan with formulary (list of preferred drugs) and pharmacy network that best suits your needs.

A Quality Plan

- Protections against adverse drugs interactions.
- Electronic prescribing to minimize medical errors.
- Pharmacy therapy management for chronic conditions.

How Will Our Prescription Drug Plan Affect You?

Average Senior's Drug Cost Now	$2,150
Average Cost Under Proposed Rx Plan:	$1,050
Average Savings:	**$1,100**