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February 17, 2006

The Honorable Bill Thomas
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thomas:

On behalf of Committee Democrats, we are writing once again to request that the Committee on Ways and Means schedule a series of hearings to oversee implementation of the new Medicare prescription drug program.

At virtually every Health Subcommittee hearing last year, Democrats asked for oversight hearings on Part D. In addition, as you know, Democrats on the Health Subcommittee wrote to Mrs. Johnson last June asking for hearings. Because there was no response, several of us wrote to you in October, 2005 raising concerns about Part D issues that fall under several different subcommittee and requesting hearings. Again, there has been no response.

Thus, you can imagine our surprise when we saw that the Committee's "views and estimates" letter which was considered yesterday indicates that the Committee will "*continue its efforts to oversee implementation*" of the prescription drug program. This language is nearly identical to language in last year's letter, but it is striking given that the Committee has held 59 hearings thus far in the 109th Congress, including 14 hearings on health care issues, and yet not a single hearing on the prescription drug program.

Every other Committee with even a tangential relationship to Medicare has either scheduled hearings or announced their intention to do so (see enclosure). It is embarrassing to us that the Committee on Ways and Means is failing to uphold its duties. Indeed, it would appear to an outside observer that the Committee is in denial with respect to the problems facing so many of our constituents.

We hope you will reconsider and schedule an aggressive series of balanced hearings this Spring. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Charles B. Rangel
Ranking Democrat

Pete Stark
Ranking Democrat
Subcommittee on Health

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG OVERSIGHT HEARINGS
as of February 17, 2006[1]

Committee on Ways and Means

N/A

Committee on Energy and Commerce

March 1, 2006 (scheduled)

Senate Finance Committee

February 8, 2006
September 14, 2004

Senate Special Committee on Aging

February 2, 2006
March 3, 2005

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information and International Security*

September 22, 2005

[1]*compiled by the Democratic staff, Committee on Ways and Means*