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Strengthening Medicare

:: A Framework to Modernize and Improve Medicare ::



President George W. Bush talks about the importance of Medicare and medical liability reform during the American Medical Association's National Conference in Washington, D.C., Tuesday, March 4, 2003. White House photo by Paul Morse.

Keeping Our Promise to America's Seniors *President Bush Signs the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003*

Accomplishing Four Great Goals for Our Health Care System

- The Medicare reforms signed by President Bush accomplish s four great goals for our nation's health care system.
- **The new law provides prescription drug benefits under Medicare.**
 - President Bush said, "Drug coverage under Medicare will allow seniors to replace more expensive surgeries and hospitalizations with less expensive prescription medicine. And even more important, drug coverage under Medicare will save our seniors from a lot of worry. Some older Americans spend much of their Social Security checks just on their medications. Some cut down on the dosage, to make a bottle of pills last longer. Elderly Americans should not have to live with those kinds of fears and hard choices. And this new law will ease the burden on seniors and give them the extra help they need."
- **The new law gives older Americans more health care choices so they can find the health coverage that best meets their needs.**
 - As President Bush stated, "Every senior needs to know: If you don't want to change your current coverage, you don't have to change. You're the one in charge. If you want to keep your Medicare the way it is, along with the new prescription benefit, that is your right. If you want to

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improve benefits – maybe dental coverage, or eyeglass coverage, or managed care plans that reduce out-of-pocket costs – you'll be free to make those choices as well. And when seniors have the ability to make choices, health care plans within Medicare will have to compete for their business by offering higher quality service. For the seniors of America, more choices and more control will mean better health care."

- **The new law makes Medicare smarter and more efficient – providing screenings that will enable doctors and patients to diagnose and treat health problems early.**

- According to President Bush, "For years, our seniors have been denied Medicare coverage ... for a basic physical exam. Beginning in 2005, all newly-enrolled Medicare beneficiaries will be covered for a complete physical. The Medicare system will now help seniors and their doctors diagnose health problems early, so they can treat them early and our seniors can have a better quality life. For example, starting next year, all people on Medicare will be covered for blood tests that can diagnose heart diseases. Those at high risk for diabetes will be covered for blood sugar screening tests. Modern health care is not complete without prevention – so we are expanding preventative services under Medicare."

- **The new law enables Americans to pay for out-of-pocket health care expenses through new Health Savings Accounts.**

- President Bush said, "Our laws encourage people to plan for retirement and to save for education. Now the law will make it easier for Americans to save for their future health care as well. A Health Savings Account is a good deal, and all Americans should consider it. Every year, the money not spent would stay in the account and gain interest tax-free, just like an IRA. And people will have an incentive to live more healthy lifestyles because they want to see their Health Savings Account grow."

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