

**Business News****Seniors slam Medicare law in visit with Dodd**

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03/20/2004

NEW HAVEN — Seniors at Tower One/Tower East slammed the new Medicare law Friday at a meeting with Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn.

"The whole thing is designed to destroy Medicare. It's the first step," said Mary Bergan, 80, a resident of Tower One and one of more than 100 seniors who attended the meeting.

Marjorie Sinel, 62, who was visiting her mother Hilda Israel, 91, at Tower One, told Dodd she wants the government to cap prescription drug costs as the Canadian government does.

"This bill looks like a direct giveaway to help the pharmaceutical industry. The pharmaceutical companies are not spending money on research. They are spending money on those moronic ads," Sinel said as the seniors applauded.

Dodd said he voted against the Medicare bill and that investigations are under way as to what happened during and before the vote on the bill.

Dodd alleged that Republicans used bribes and threats to get the bill passed. "This will be an election issue," he said.

Dodd held the meeting to inform seniors about the new Medicare bill, and brought in several speakers, including Beverly Kidder, director of the Aging Resource Center at the South Central Connecticut Agency on Aging in New Haven; Judith Stein, founder of the Center for Medicare Advocacy in Willimantic; and Craig Schneider, manager of the financial management branch for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid in Boston.

Schneider said anyone with further questions may call (800) MEDICARE.

The panel warned the seniors to be very attentive to the discount drug card program.

Stein urged seniors to learn if the discount cards offered cover the specific medications they use, to find out exactly what the discount would be, and to find out if the card had an enrollment fee.

Seniors should be careful because they get locked into the card program for a year, Stein said, and the companies that own the cards can change the benefits every week.

Dodd also warned seniors to beware of fraudulent Medicare discount cards in the mail.

The new Medicare program offers some benefits the old Medicare program did not. For instance, low-income seniors with less than \$6,000 in savings get their first \$600 of medicine free and pay no premiums and no deductibles.

The Medicare bill also offers free physical exams for those who enroll in Medicare, and free screening for heart disease and diabetes.

Vivian Jackson, 83, a Tower One resident, said seniors will take any help they can get.

"We need help with medical bills. The cost of medicine is going higher and higher," Jackson said.

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