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CONGRESS HAS THE POWER TO FIX MEDICARE PART D

Contact: Judith Stein, esq.
jstein@medicareadvocacy.org
(860) 456-7790

“Congress needs to replace Medicare Part D with a comprehensive prescription drug benefit in the Medicare program,” said Judith Stein, Executive Director of the Center for Medicare Advocacy, in a statement released in connection with a briefing by the House Committee on Government Reform.

The problems we have seen in the early days of Part D implementation will change over time but they will not go away – and some will get worse. “The problems are fundamental and systemic. They derive from the structure of the Medicare Part D program that Congress passed as part of the Medicare Act of 2003,” says Ms. Stein.

“Blame for Medicare Part D rests primarily with Congress, which enacted this complex, unworkable system,” said Ms. Stein. While staff at CMS have in some instances added unnecessary complexity and have chosen to give plans greater leeway than necessary, “it is Congress that wrote this legislation to privatize and fragment Medicare and to limit federal oversight. It is Congress that must fix the law”.

“The drug benefit needs to be part of Medicare and it needs to be uniform and consistent from plan to plan and throughout the United States,” continues Ms. Stein. “In the meantime, Congress should slow down the enrollment process, should suspend existing late penalties for those who do not enroll when they are first eligible, and should forgive lock-in provisions for those people who have enrolled.”