



CMA Press Release – April 19, 2006

## **NOT EXTENDING THE MEDICARE PART D ENROLLMENT DEADLINE IS A MISTAKE**

Judith Stein, one of the nation's leading experts on Medicare and the executive director of the Center for Medicare Advocacy, is calling for our government to extend the deadline to sign up for Medicare Part D (prescription drug coverage). Seniors and disabled people who don't sign up for Medicare Part D by May 15 will face penalties if they sign up later.

The Center for Medicare Advocacy understands that the government has been asked to extend the deadline and has declined - they think this is a bad decision because:

1. Part D is brand new, and even the President agrees, complex. The first few months of the program's implementation was widely acknowledged to be a mess. People need time to get over that rocky start and to have enough confidence in what they are choosing to enroll.
2. It is difficult to obtain complete information about the actual cost of needed drugs. The prices of drugs vary dramatically from plan to plan, and plans have changed prices and their lists of covered drugs. Seniors should get enrollment packages in writing from the plans they are interested in so that they can study them, and this takes time.
3. People can't switch plans, so it is not fair to force them to enroll before they are comfortable with their decision.

The Center for Medicare Advocacy is working to increase access to comprehensive Medicare coverage and health care for elders and people with disabilities. Judith Stein is available for interviews. For more information about her and the Center for Medicare Advocacy, please see <http://www.fairmedicare.org/>.