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MEDICARE MATTERS: KEEP IT FAIR AND AFFORDABLE

The Center for Medicare Advocacy applauds Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi for her support of Medicare beneficiaries.

Congresswoman Pelosi, the likely next Speaker of the House of Representatives, has a history of working to ensure that Medicare laws are written to benefit older people and people with disabilities. She has announced that working to change unjust Medicare laws will be among her first priorities as Speaker.

Currently the Medicare prescription drug law actually *prohibits* the government from negotiating prices for drugs on behalf of all 43 million people with Medicare. The law only lets individual plans negotiate with drug companies - this is akin to Wal-Mart allowing each local store to negotiate prices, but refusing to allow bulk purchasing for *all* of Wal-Mart.

To save money, smart shoppers buy in bulk and buy at stores that buy in bulk – they should be able to count on Medicare to also be a smart shopper and to buy medications in bulk from drug companies for the new Part D drug program. Congresswoman Pelosi will be pursuing just such bulk purchasing as one of her top priorities. The Center for Medicare Advocacy calls on all of Congress to support this priority, as well as other plans for a fairer, simpler, and less expensive system for Medicare beneficiaries.

According to Judith Stein, executive director of the Center for Medicare Advocacy, “Part D is seriously flawed and needs repair because it is unfair, unnecessarily expensive, and ignores the needs of some of our nation’s most vulnerable people. Part D passed with huge support from the drug and managed care industries because they knew they would be true beneficiaries of the law.”

“With a new Congress, we hope we can fix Part D,” says Ms. Stein. “Let’s implement a Medicare prescription drug program that does not funnel billions of dollars to drug and managed care industries at the expense of older people and people with disabilities. Let’s focus Medicare and the tax dollars that fund it on the needs of people instead of big industries. Such a fair, affordable system will allow Medicare to be a valuable program today and for the aging baby boomers who will need its protection tomorrow.”