

Seniors

The issues I hear about the most from seniors are problems that we should all care about - retirement security, our health care system, access to affordable prescription drugs, and a stable economy. In the last few years, we have made progress with important legislation to help seniors, but we have yet to tackle the most complex issues affecting them.

In order to provide for a secure retirement, we must take serious steps to address the strains on Medicare and the Social Security Trust Fund. I opposed President Bush's efforts to privatize Social Security; given the recent drops on Wall Street, I think that plan would have put our nation in even worse financial shape.

To ensure that seniors continue to have access to adequate medical care, we must see to it that doctors receive adequate reimbursement for treating Medicare patients. While it's clear that the long-term fiscal solvency of Medicare needs to be addressed, stop-gap payment cuts that hurt seniors and providers alike are not the solution. By reversing the proposed reimbursement rates cuts to doctors under Medicare in 2008, we helped to preserve patient choice and ensure access to life-saving care.

American seniors can no longer afford the prices they are paying for prescription medications. Here in the U.S., we pay more for drugs than almost any other developed nation in the world despite the fact that many of these medications are developed right here on American soil. As the wealthiest nation in the world with the highest per capita spending on health care, we can and should be doing more to make our lifesaving prescriptions more affordable for working Americans.

One step is to improve access to approved generic drugs, which are sold at a savings to consumers. We also need to change the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit so that the federal government can negotiate for cheaper drugs for our seniors. Currently, the federal government is prohibited from negotiating directly with drug manufacturers, and as a result the Medicare prescription drug law has failed to slow the rapid growth in drug prices. Neither seniors nor taxpayers should bear responsibility for these increases, especially while drug companies are reporting record profits.

Property taxes can be an undue burden on the budgets of seniors in Connecticut. So in my first term, I pushed to pass legislation that created a federal tax break for 220,000 homeowners in Connecticut, including many seniors, who pay some form of property taxes but either elect not to take the deduction on their schedule A or do not itemize their deductions.

Connecticut's seniors deserve to spend their retirements knowing that here in Washington, we are setting policies that meet their needs, and provide for generations to come.

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