

## Murphy: Seniors Can't Afford Medicare Premium Increase in a Recession; House Passes Bill to Stop Increase for 11 Million Americans

To protect seniors and the disabled on Medicare in Connecticut from harmful premium increases, today Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) proudly supported H.R. 3631, the Medicare Premium Fairness Act. The legislation will protect seniors and people with disabilities from 2010 increases in premiums for Medicare Part B, which provides physician visits for seniors.

September 24, 2009

Contact: Kristen Bossi

(202) 225-4476

WASHINGTON, D.C. - To protect seniors and the disabled on Medicare in Connecticut from harmful premium increases, today Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) proudly supported H.R. 3631, the Medicare Premium Fairness Act. The legislation will protect seniors and people with disabilities from 2010 increases in premiums for Medicare Part B, which provides physician visits for seniors. With Social Security benefits expected to remain at the same level next year due to a formula that takes into account inflation, an increase in Medicare Part B premiums would cut into some seniors' Social Security if Congress doesn't act.

"Lately, Washington has been a pretty divided place, but protecting people from Medicare premium increases while their Social Security checks stay the same is something that we can all agree on. And from my visits with seniors in Connecticut over the last few months, I know Congress taking action on this issue will give them some relief next year," said Murphy, who as one of the first Members of the House to sign on to the bill, is an original cosponsor of this important legislation.

The majority of seniors and disabled citizens on Medicare would not have seen a reduction in their Social Security checks caused by Medicare Part B premium increases because of a clause in existing law, known as "hold harmless."

But more than 11 million people on Medicare Part B fall into categories that would have been affected, including low-income individuals who are eligible for Medicare and Medicaid, new Medicare enrollees, and enrollees whose Medicare premiums are not deducted from their Social Security checks. These individuals would see their premiums be disproportionately increased to up to \$120 per month, a potential 20% increase, unless Congress acts. So for the first time, Congress is stepping in to stop these increases to save seniors money in this tough economy.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates the cost of the bill at \$2.8 billion for 2010. The cost is fully covered by reducing the Medicare Improvement Fund, a non-controversial set-aside fund in Medicare.

"Today's vote is another example of Congress' focus on lowering health care costs, and I hope we can move forward from here on health care reform that continues to chip away at cost for individuals and businesses," said Murphy.

# # #