

Congressman Rothman Reminds Seniors to Check if they Qualify for Lower Prescription Drug Prices

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This month, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that approximately two million low-income Medicare beneficiaries are eligible for the Low-Income Subsidy Program, but remain unenrolled. Were these individuals to take advantage of this program they could pay less than \$6.30 for prescription drugs and less than \$2.50 for generic drugs.

"Especially during these tough economic times, it's important for seniors throughout the Ninth Congressional District, the State of New Jersey, and across America, to take full advantage of the prescription drug programs that are available to them," said Congressman Steve Rothman. "At times it can be a confusing process, but in order to enroll or check if one is eligible, low-income seniors can call the Social Security Administration at (800) 772-1213 or visit www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp."

Here is the information provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services:

[The] Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that some Medicare beneficiaries could qualify for assistance with their prescription drug costs, and be eligible this year to pay no more than \$2.50 for generic drugs and \$6.30 for each brand name drug. The steps and requirements beneficiaries can take to check if they qualify for the Medicare Low-Income Subsidy Program (also known as LIS or "Extra Help") are simple and may be done by phone or online. CMS estimates that more than 2 million people with Medicare may be eligible for the subsidy, but are not currently enrolled to take advantage of these savings.

Changes resulting from the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) of 2008 made it easier for Medicare beneficiaries to qualify for "Extra Help" by changing the way income and assets are counted. As of last year, the Social Security Administration,

which determines eligibility for the program, does not count life insurance policies as a resource for eligibility purposes. In addition, help received from family and friends to pay for household expenses like food, mortgage, rent and utilities does not count as income.

To qualify, Medicare beneficiaries' incomes must be less than \$16,335 a year (or \$22,065 for married couples) and have resources limited to \$12,640 (or \$25,260 for married couples). Resources include bank accounts, stocks, and bonds, but do not include a beneficiary's house, car, or life insurance policy.

Medicare beneficiaries can apply online in English and Spanish at www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp or call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778) and ask for the Application for Medicare's Part D Extra Help.

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