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March 22, 2004

Rothman Holds Forum To Help Explain Details Of New Prescription Drug Law To Seniors Visits Lyndhurst Senior Center; Plays Walter Cronkite Video Describing What Coverage Seniors Will Receive

Lyndhurst, NJ - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) today met with local seniors at the Lyndhurst Senior Center to help explain how the Bush prescription drug bill will impact them. The Congressman said that the law fails to provide seniors with the voluntary, guaranteed drug benefit under Medicare that Rothman had pushed for when Congress debated the bill last year. Instead, Rothman said the President and the Republican-controlled Congress approved a measure that provides no drug coverage until 2006, and then forces millions of seniors to pay more for drugs if they don't give up their doctor and join an HMO.

"It is important that seniors learn about what the Bush prescription drug law means for them and exactly how much they are going to have to pay for their medication," Rothman said. "This prescription drug plan is a bad deal for seniors and a bad deal for Medicare. It is not a voluntary program - if seniors do not sign up for the prescription drug program when it starts then the premium goes up each year they don't enroll by 12 percent. And seniors that enroll in the new drug plan will see their benefit shrink each year."

Under the new law, individual seniors with an annual income over \$13,470 and married senior couples with an annual income over \$18,180 who have prescription drug bills of \$3,155 per year would pay \$2,075 for their medication - a 34 percent savings from the full cost. Those same seniors with drug costs of \$4,000 per year would pay \$2,920 -- a savings of 27 percent. If those seniors' drug costs were \$5,000 annually, they would pay \$3,920 - a savings of 21 percent. Rothman pointed out that premiums under this new law could have been much lower had the Bush Administration accepted the view of Rothman and his fellow Democrats in Congress that the prescription drug plan should be run solely under Medicare and that Medicare be allowed to negotiate for the best drug prices. This would have realized a savings of \$226 billion over 10 years, which could have been used to reduce premiums, copays, and deductibles for seniors. Doing so would have also had the benefit of keeping seniors out of HMOs and preserving Medicare.

At the event, Rothman also played a video featuring Walter Cronkite in which the trusted former news anchor discusses the new law. The video was produced by Families USA, which is a non-profit, non-partisan organization focused on providing high-quality, affordable health care to all Americans.

Rothman said, "I support and will continue to fight for a real prescription drug plan that actually lowers the cost of prescription drugs, has affordable premiums and a reasonable deductible, and is guaranteed and available to all seniors within the Medicare program."

Rothman said that one of the primary reasons he held today's forum was because many seniors have told him that they are still very confused about what the new prescription drug law means for them.

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