

## Ways and Means Approves Altmire Legislation as Part of SCHIP-Medicare Package

(Washington, DC) - The House Ways and Means Committee voted today to incorporate legislation introduced by Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4) into the Children's Health and Medicare Act (CHAMP) that will help make health care more affordable for western Pennsylvania's seniors.

Congressman Altmire introduced the Relief and Elimination of the Medicare Enrollment Deadline Penalty (REMEDY) Act (H.R. 1310) in March, which would permanently eliminate the Medicare Part D late enrollment penalty for low-income subsidy beneficiaries who may otherwise find it difficult to pay for the increase in their monthly premium.

"I am pleased that the Committee has voted to include this important legislation in the SCHIP-Medicare package," said Congressman Altmire. "Seniors should not be penalized for trying to make smart choices about their health care. I introduced the REMEDY Act to provide Medicare beneficiaries with enough time to evaluate all of their options under Medicare Part D and to choose the coverage that works best for them."

"There are approximately 4.4 million Medicare beneficiaries nationwide who do not have prescription drug coverage and who may be subject to a late enrollment penalty," added Congressman Altmire. "This legislation would make prescription drug coverage more accessible for millions of Medicare beneficiaries, especially seniors with limited incomes."

"I have been frustrated since the creation of the prescription drug program that low-income seniors are being unfairly penalized if they need additional time to navigate the confusing and complicated Medicare Part D program," said House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer. "I am very pleased that Rep. Altmire has successfully worked to ensure that this issue is addressed. It is a testament to both his effectiveness and his concern for all of his constituents."

"I applaud Congressman Altmire for this forward thinking and thoughtful approach to helping make the Medicare drug benefit work better for seniors in western Pennsylvania," said House Democratic Caucus Chairman Rahm Emanuel. "With this common sense change, millions will receive the care and support they deserve."

As part of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA), Congress included provisions to apply a late enrollment penalty to premiums of Medicare beneficiaries who failed to select a prescription drug plan by the end of the initial enrollment period on May 15, 2006. The late enrollment penalty is approximately 1% of the average monthly premium multiplied by the number of months an individual delays enrolling. The penalty applies for as long as the beneficiary is enrolled in a Part D plan.