

Altmire Scores Major Health Care Victories for Western PA's Seniors

(Aliquippa, PA) - U.S. Representative Jason Altmire (PA-4) scored major victories this week in his effort to make health care more affordable and accessible for western Pennsylvania's seniors. One of Congressman Altmire's legislative priorities, the elimination of the Medicare Part D late enrollment penalty for low-income seniors, was partially adopted by the Bush Administration. Congressman Altmire also successfully helped broker a deal to save Pennsylvania's hospitals \$74 million and preserve access to health care services for millions of seniors nationwide.

"This week's successes are a major win for Pennsylvania's seniors who depend on Medicare, including the 124,000 that reside in my district," said Congressman Altmire. "These steps move us in the right direction and toward addressing the health care needs of our seniors. Each helps seniors continue to see the doctors of their choice, to receive the care and services they need, and to keep their out of pocket health care costs low."

On Thursday, the Bush Administration adopted a policy championed by Congressman Altmire that waives the Medicare Part D late enrollment penalty for low-income seniors through December 2008. Under this rule, new, low-income enrollees will not be assessed the penalty for uncovered months in 2006, 2007 and 2008. While this is a step in the right direction, Congressman Altmire continues to work to make the waiver permanent and to completely eliminate the penalty for low-income seniors. In March, he introduced the Relief and Elimination of the Medicare Enrollment Deadline Penalty (REMEDY) Act (H.R. 1310). The Act was incorporated into the Children's Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act that passed in the U.S. House of Representatives on August 1 by a vote of 225 to 204.

Also this week, Congressman Altmire worked to successfully include a provision in H.R. 3668, legislation to extend health care programs scheduled to expire on September 30, 2007, that will save hospitals nationwide \$20.3 billion over the next five years and will protect access to health care for millions of Medicare beneficiaries. The measure will limit the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in the implementation of a 1.2 percent behavioral offset cut to total payments for services provided to Medicare patients in FY08 and a 1.8 percent reduction in FY09. Congressman Altmire was a leader among the freshmen class in bringing this issue to a vote on the House floor Wednesday by initiating a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, co-signed by 37 of his colleagues. H.R. 3668 was passed by the Senate last night and is expected to be signed into law by the president shortly.