



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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INFORMATIONAL COLUMN

SENIORCARE SAFE FOR NOW

One of the most valuable Wisconsin health care programs was at a critical crossroads. SeniorCare, which serves 90,000 Wisconsin seniors, was in danger of losing its federal waiver. If that were to happen, our state's seniors would be forced into a substandard federal program, Medicare Part D that offers fewer benefits and no long-term guarantees.

Thankfully, due to the quick action of Governor Doyle and pressure from Democrats in the legislature, the federal government has agreed to allow SeniorCare to operate until its waiver ends in June of 2007. Previous information had indicated that this program would have been ended much sooner to make way for Medicare Part D.

The agreement Governor Doyle reached with US Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Levitt will allow seniors currently enrolled in SeniorCare to remain in that program or sign up for Medicare Part D. A 2004 Department of Health and Family Services study showed that 94 percent of SeniorCare participants would fare better under the state plan than under the federal plan. For seniors who qualify for a low-income subsidy, however, the new Medicare Part D may be a better option. The important thing is that these seniors are now allowed a choice, and many will get to stick with the better option - SeniorCare.

From the very beginning, I have been skeptical of the federal prescription drug program. Its creators purposefully misled the American people about its true costs, the savings seniors will achieve under this plan are largely unknown and there are no safeguards against increases in premiums and deductibles. Worst of all, this program was designed to provide the most benefit to only those with the lowest income, whereas SeniorCare treats all Wisconsin seniors equally.

That is why it was so important to fight for SeniorCare and why I am glad that this vital program will be with us through the life of its waiver. We cannot rest, however. We still need to make it clear to the federal government that SeniorCare must be allowed to continue after its waiver expires in 2007, and I will help the Governor in

his efforts to achieve this. I urge everyone with a vested interest in the future of this program to contact your US Congresspersons and Senators and ask them to continue to fight for SeniorCare. It will not be easy - getting money from Washington never is - but we cannot afford to give up.

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