

Column from Sen. Matt Bartle for

Week of Oct. 10, 2005

Elderly Prescription-drug Assistance: Help is Available

In this era of tight budgets and high health-care costs, Missouri seniors are in need of assistance when it comes to prescription drugs. Fortunately, there are programs available for seniors and individuals with disabilities to help pay for their prescription-drug needs.

The federal Medicare Prescription Drug Program, also known as Medicare Part D, offers a variety of drug plans to meet the differing needs of Missouri seniors. Under the drug plans, seniors pay a monthly premium, a yearly deductible and a portion of their prescription-drug costs for various levels of coverage. Of the approximately 900,000 Missourians enrolled in or eligible for Medicare, approximately 440,000 have been automatically deemed eligible for the low-income subsidy.

Anyone already enrolled in Medicare Part A and/or B is eligible for the new prescription-drug program. Approved Medicare Prescription Drug Plans began marketing their new programs October 1, and the *2006 Medicare & You* booklet can be accessed online at www.medicare.gov or by phone at 1-800-633-4227. Enrollment into the new prescription-drug plans begins November 15 and continues through May 15, 2006.

While this new federal program is sure to provide needed assistance to eligible seniors, there is also available a non-governmental program that helps low-income Missourians access prescription drugs. Partnership for Prescription Assistance: Missouri (or PPARxMO) connects qualified low-income Missourians with discount prescription drugs direct from the manufacturers.

American pharmaceutical companies, patient-advocacy groups, doctors and community organizations have joined forces to offer PPARxMO. This is another great resource for elderly patients. PPARxMO will help elderly enroll in more than 150 company-patient

assistance programs, access more than 1,200 medicines for free or at a reduced cost, and learn how to contact government programs for which they might qualify, such as Medicaid, Medicare or Missouri's Health Insurance Program for Children.

This new program helps to streamline the process of receiving assistance through state, federal and private prescription-drug plans. For more information on PPARxMO, visit <http://pparxmo.org> or call (888) 477-2669.

With the rising cost of prescription drugs taking a toll on our pocketbooks, these forms of assistance are helpful in ensuring that Missourians receive the medical treatment they need.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278.

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