

National Retiree Legislative Network Agenda on Health Care Reform Legislation

- Retiree health care must be a priority during Congress' deliberations on health care reform. Guard against harming Medicare or company-sponsored health care benefits that retirees have earned.
- Health care reform should include a provision which would prevent broken promises to retirees by providing what the NRLN calls a **Maintenance of Cost Payment (MCP)**. The MCP would establish a fixed monthly payment to retirees equivalent to the dollar value of benefits an employer provided at retirement, prior to the reduction or cancellation of retirement benefits such as health care, prescription drugs, life insurance, long-term care, catastrophic coverage and other benefits. The MCP would be used to purchase replacement coverage for as much of the lost benefits as possible. Under the NRLN's proposal, companies would be entitled to tax credits to encourage them to continue to offer defined benefit plans or provide the MCP. Members of Congress need to promote this proposal during the health care debate.
- Don't tax retirees for the health care benefits they may still receive from their former employer.
- When an employer eliminates its health care plan, retirees usually lose "catastrophic coverage" which limits out-of-pocket medical expenses to a fixed amount, such as \$1,500. Given this loss, the NRLN believes that **catastrophic coverage** should be added to Medicare to prevent retiree bankruptcies.
- It is difficult for many men and women age 50 to 64 who have been laid off or retired early—either forced or voluntary—to purchase affordable health care insurance because of their age. They should be allowed to **buy into Medicare at a cost** that does not burden the system.
- Funding should be provided in health care reform legislation to **eliminate the "doughnut hole"** in the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan.
- Congress should pass legislation that allows for the importation of prescription drugs, competitive bidding by makers of prescription drugs and funding for the FDA to reduce generic drug backlogs; and the prohibition of drug companies from making payoffs to generic manufacturers who withhold the introduction of new generic drugs into the marketplace.
- Health care reform should include both **private and public health insurance options.**
- Similar to Medicare, the government-sponsored plan should offer open competition to private insurance companies, i.e. the plan should mirror Medicare's offerings without the government taking over medical facilities and without intrusion into an individual's selection of medical-care insurance options. A government-sponsored plan should allow reasonable doctors' fees but not control doctors' service offerings nor result in the rationing of America's health care.

For more on the NRLN go to www.nrln.org and click on the link to read the NRLN's complete Legislative Agenda.