

Talking Points: Asking Congress to Prioritize Medicare, Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act in the Lame Duck Session

Dial the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to speak to your Senators/Representative.

Once connected, tell the staff member who answers the phone **YOUR NAME, YOUR CITY/STATE** and that you are calling to ask **Senator X/Representative X** to protect and strengthen programs for older adults and people with disabilities in the lame duck session. (If no one answers, leave a message! Include your name and contact information, and deliver the message below)

Deliver your message:

This Thanksgiving season, I am thankful for Medicare and the health coverage and consumer protections it provides people in our **STATE/DISTRICT**.

As a constituent, I want to express my support for strengthening and improving Medicare in the lame duck session. I urge **Senator X/Representative X** to:

- **Pass the BENES Act**, which would streamline Part B enrollment and making sure every American gets accurate information about how and when to enroll in Medicare; and to
- **Oppose any attempt to raise prescription drug costs for people with Medicare**, including efforts to roll back recent legislative changes to the Part D program that help reduce out-of-pocket costs for people with Medicare.

Don't forget to make it personal! Tell the staffer why you are thankful for Medicare, sharing your connection with the programs and those it helps.

Conclude by thanking the staffer for their time before hanging up.

Additional Information:

The BENES Act (S. 1909; H.R. 2575)

People receiving Social Security benefits are automatically enrolled in Part B, but today many Americans are working longer, delaying retirement, and deferring those benefits. These individuals must actively enroll in Medicare; taking into account varied and complicated rules. Those who mistakenly delay Part B can face significant consequences, including a lifetime of higher premiums, substantial out-of-pocket health care costs, gaps in coverage, and barriers to accessing needed services. The bicameral, bipartisan BENES Act aims to prevent these mistakes by empowering beneficiaries to make timely, well-informed enrollment decisions, and by streamlining the outdated Medicare Part B enrollment process. [Click here](#) for a one-pager about the bill, and here to send an email to your lawmakers, asking them to co-sponsor the BENES Act.

The BBA's Donut Hole Reforms

The recently enacted Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (BBA) included important provisions to improve the affordability of prescription drugs for Medicare beneficiaries by closing the Part D coverage gap or “donut hole” one year earlier and requiring higher drug manufacturer discounts on brand name prescription drugs for enrollees while they are in that coverage gap. This higher discount will allow beneficiaries to move through the donut hole more quickly, lowering their out-of-pocket costs and ensuring they can better access needed care.

Now, rather than build off the progress Congress has made to lower out-of-pocket costs, brand-name drug manufacturers are actively working to reverse this change. They are asking lawmakers to shift some of their liability onto beneficiaries and taxpayers in order to lower their own costs. Lessening beneficiary prescription drug affordability by rescinding the BBA's donut hole changes—only to provide a [\\$4 billion windfall](#) to the pharmaceutical industry—would be a deeply concerning retreat from the progress that Congress achieved in enacting those reforms earlier this year.