



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

Barbara B. Kennelly, Chair

February 3, 2006

The Honorable Tim Johnson
136 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Stephanie Herseth
331 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Johnson and Congresswoman Herseth:

We the undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) are writing in support of your legislation, S. 1795 and H.R. 3954, the *Social Security COLA Protection Act of 2005*, which would protect seniors' Social Security income from increases in prescription drug and other health care costs. This legislation would limit to 25 percent the amount a person's Social Security cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) could be reduced by increases in the Medicare Part B premium in 2006 and by combined increases in the Part B and Part D premiums beginning in 2007.

Under current law, increases in the Part B premium cannot exceed the COLA in any year; the new Medicare prescription drug law offers no such protection from increases in the Part D premium. Due to rising health care costs, Medicare Part B premiums will increase by 13 percent, or \$10.30, in 2006, while the average 4.1 percent COLA increase will be \$39 a month. This means that the 2006 Part B premium will consume over one-fourth (26 percent) of the average Social Security COLA. Beginning in 2007, Social Security benefits will be further diminished by Part D premiums that grow each year by the increase in the cost of drugs used by Medicare beneficiaries.

The LCAO appreciates your leadership on this issue and thanks you for your legislation to protect the retirement income of Social Security recipients from rapidly-rising health care and prescription drug costs.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO

AFSCME Retiree Program

Alliance for Retired Americans

American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement & Retirees

American Foundation for the Blind

American Society of Consultant Pharmacists

B'nai B'rith International Center

Families USA

Military Officers Association of America

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

National Association of Foster Grandparent Program Directors

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers

National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors, Inc.

National Association of Senior Companion Project Directors

National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.

National Senior Citizens Law Center

OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women

Service Employees International Union

United Auto Workers Retired Workers Department