

## Campaign for Drug Coverage Under Original Medicare

The Medicare Rights Center, along with health advocates around the country, expects that there will be an effort to cover the uninsured and enact fundamental health care reforms in the next Congress. That legislative effort provides an opportunity to strengthen Medicare both for the older adults and people with disabilities now served by the program and as a public option under a new plan for universal coverage. Strengthening Medicare requires a reversal of the current drive to privatize delivery of the Medicare benefit, especially drug coverage, which is now only available through private companies. Providing people with Medicare the choice of drug coverage under Original Medicare will create a refuge from the instability, high drug prices and coverage gaps that characterize the privately run Part D benefit.

In 2007 and 2008, a broad range of organizations campaigned to end the excess subsidies to private Medicare health plans that threaten to undermine Medicare's viability as a social insurance program that brings together rich and poor, healthy and sick in a common risk pool. Those efforts will and must continue. But the fight against Medicare's privatization should also include the demand for drug coverage under Original Medicare.

Senator Richard Durbin, Democrat of Illinois, and Representatives Jan Schakowsky, Democrat of Illinois, and Marion Berry, Democrat of Arkansas, have introduced the Medicare Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act of 2007 (H.R. 3932 in the House and S. 2219 in the Senate), which would create a drug coverage option under Original Medicare. By partnership building, grassroots organizing, education and media outreach, and pressure on elected representatives, support for this initiative can help ensure that it will be on the agenda for health care reform in 2009. If we start now with your help, we can make it happen next year!