

## **Campaign for Drug Coverage Under Original Medicare**

The Medicare Rights Center and health advocates around the country are energized by efforts to cover the uninsured and enact fundamental health care reforms in Congress. The legislative effort provides an opportunity to strengthen Medicare for both the older adults and people with disabilities now served by the program. Strengthening Medicare requires a reversal of the current drive to privatize delivery of the Medicare benefit, particularly drug coverage, which is now available only 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 Medicare private health plans, which threaten Medicare's viability as a social insurance program that brings together rich and poor, healthy and sick, in a common risk pool. In 2009, success seems close at hand; the Obama administration and many members of Congress have stated publicly that eliminating these subsidies is a priority. 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, Representative Marion Berry, Democrat of Arkansas, and Representative Jan Schakowsky, Democrat of Illinois, have introduced the Medicare Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act of 2009 (H.R. 684 in the House of Representatives and S. 330 in the Senate), which would create a drug coverage option under Original Medicare. All forms of support for this initiative—partnership building, grassroots organizing, education and media outreach, and applying pressure on elected representatives—can help ensure its success in the current Congress. If we start now with your help, we can make it happen!