

# Americans United

[www.americansunitedforchange.org](http://www.americansunitedforchange.org)

For Immediate Release  
Date: May 11, 2006

Contact: Gary Zuckett, WV Citizen Action  
Phone: 346-5891 or 299-3193

## **New Report Shows That Part D Has Failed West Virginia's Low Income Seniors**

### **West Virginians United & Americans United Released the Report As Part of an Ongoing Effort to Convince Capito to Extend the May 15th Deadline and Fix Part D**

Charleston WV– West Virginians United, the state partner of Americans United released a Families USA report today that shows that the Bush Part D plan has failed to provide drug coverage to most of the low income West Virginia seniors eligible for subsidies and, on average, left the poorest of the poor worse off. This is part of a campaign to convince the President and majority lawmakers to extend the May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for all seniors to enroll in Medicare Part D and fix the inherent problems plaguing the drug program.

The embattled prescription drug program has been called costly, confusing and corrupt because, at the behest of the Administration, it was designed to benefit the drug and insurance companies more than our seniors. Both groups are urging Rep Capito and President Bush to extend the May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for all seniors and fix the Part D Disaster by providing a drug benefit that is simple, affordable and guaranteed.

The report, prepared by Families USA, is entitled “*The Medicare Drug Program Fails to Reach Low-Income Seniors*” and explains that “More than three out of every four Low-Income Seniors eligible for Special Subsidies are still without drug coverage.” **The report shows that as of the end of April only 21% of eligible low income seniors in WV were signed up for the Low Income benefit,** commented Gary Zuckett of Citizen Action, “**This is a life-threatening situation and needs to be remedied by fixing Part D, not penalizing seniors for not signing up on time.**” The report can be down-loaded at [www.wvcag.org](http://www.wvcag.org)

The Report further explains that the poorest of the poor are actually worse off. “Dual eligibles (those enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid) have also lost the protection of the Medicaid program, which covered all medically necessary drugs. They are now in a system with a confusing array of private plan formularies and utilization management rules.” Many of them are paying more now for their prescriptions than they were under the old system.

The Report underscores the need to fix Part D. **An extension of the May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline would allow the time to make the desperately needed changes to Part D – without penalizing the millions of eligible Americans without drug coverage who have not yet enrolled or who aren't receiving the low-income subsidies they were promised.**

**West Virginians and Americans United are calling for an extension of the Part D enrollment deadline and the following changes:**

- **Require Medicare to use its free market muscle to negotiate with drug companies for lower prices.**
- **Close the “donut hole” gap in coverage between \$2,250 and \$5, 100.**
- **Allow seniors the choice of obtaining their prescription drug plan directly from Medicare instead of a private insurance company.**

**West Virginians United includes WV AFL-CIO, WV Citizen Action, AFSC Economic Justice Project, National Association of Social Workers-WV, Direct Action Welfare Group & others**