

The President's Radio Address *November 12, 2005*

Good morning. This coming Tuesday, America's Medicare beneficiaries can begin to enroll for new prescription drug coverage. This new benefit is the greatest advance in health care for seniors and Americans with disabilities since the creation of Medicare 40 years ago.

In the past, Medicare would pay tens of thousands of dollars for ulcer surgery but not a few hundred dollars for prescription drugs that eliminate the cause of most ulcers. In the past, Medicare would pay more than \$100,000 to treat the effects of a stroke but not \$1,000 per year for blood-thinning drugs that could have prevented the stroke in the first place.

With this new prescription drug benefit, Medicare will now help pay for the prescription drugs that can prevent serious illness. Seniors will get more choices and better treatment, and America will get a Medicare system to fit the needs of the 21st century.

The new coverage will begin on January 1st. If you or someone you love depends on Medicare, I urge you to learn about the new choices you have, so you can make a decision and enroll. Enrollment is entirely voluntary, and seniors who want to keep their Medicare coverage the way it is will be able to do so. But for those who want to take advantage of this new drug benefit, enrolling by May 15th will ensure you the lowest possible premiums. The sooner you enroll, the sooner you can have the peace of mind this coverage will bring.

The new prescription drug coverage will benefit people on Medicare in three important ways. First, it will help all seniors and Americans with disabilities pay for prescription drugs, no matter how they pay for their medicine now. Seniors who have no drug coverage and have average prescription drug costs will see savings of at least 50 percent. And seniors who have the high-

est drug costs will receive special help. Starting in January, once a senior has spent \$3,600 in a year, Medicare will cover 95 percent of all prescription costs.

Second, this new coverage will offer more and better health care choices than ever before. That means seniors can save more and get the coverage they want, not a "one size fits all" plan that does not meet their needs. Every prescription drug plan will offer a broad choice of generic and brand-name drugs, and seniors will be able to select any Medicare prescription drug plan in their area that fits their needs and their medical history.

Third, this new prescription drug coverage will provide extra help to low-income seniors and beneficiaries with disabilities. About a third of the seniors will be eligible for a Medicare prescription drug benefit that includes little or no premiums, low deductibles, and no gaps in coverage. On average, Medicare will pick up the tab for more than 95 percent of the costs that low-income seniors pay for prescription drugs.

The days of low-income seniors having to make painful sacrifices to pay for their prescription drugs are now coming to an end. Last month, those of you on Medicare received in the mail a handbook called "Medicare and You" that includes detailed information about your options. Citizen groups and faith-based organizations across America are also working to spread the word so that Medicare recipients can get their questions answered and make informed choices.

If you have Medicare, I urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to learn more. Review your choices and make the decision that is right for you. If you have family or friends on Medicare, you can help too. Helping can be as simple as showing an older neighbor how to fill out a form or making a call for your mom or dad. You

can get information 24 hours a day by calling 1-800-MEDICARE or by visiting the official Medicare web site at medicare.gov.

In the 21st century, preventing and treating illness often require prescription drugs. In the coming months, we will help every Medicare recipient make a confident choice about their prescription drug coverage. By expanding drug coverage for our Nation's seniors, we will help all Americans on Medicare receive the modern health care they deserve.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:52 a.m. on November 11 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 11 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on the War on Terror in Anchorage, Alaska November 14, 2005

Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome. Laura and I were in the neighborhood—[*laughter*—]—thought we'd come by to say hello to the Nation's "Arctic Warriors." We're proud to stand with the courageous airmen of Elmendorf Air Force Base, the soldiers of Fort Richardson, the Coast Guard men and women here in Alaska, the men and women of the Alaskan Command, and all those who wear the uniform of our country.

The General is right about one thing—[*laughter*]—I did live in Alaska. [*Laughter*] In 1974, and I remember it just the way it looked coming in on Air Force One, this vast, majestic land, so beautiful and full of decent, honorable, independent-minded people, people who love their country.

Here at Elmendorf Air Force Base, you're defending our Nation's frontiers. You're securing freedom for future generations of Americans. Service men and women have departed this base to help liberate Iraq and Afghanistan, assist tsunami victims in Indonesia, and help those hit by the recent earthquake in Pakistan. Your courage and commitment are saving lives every day. First thing I want to tell you is the American people are grateful for your service and so is the Commander in Chief.

I also want to thank the military families who are with us today. [*Applause*] Please be seated, unless you don't have a seat. [*Laughter*] I know that for many of you, Alaska is a long way from home, and it gets especially lonely when your loved ones are deployed on dangerous missions in distant lands. You have built a strong and close-knit community here. You support each other, and you support your loved ones who stand in harm's way. I am proud of our men and women in the Armed Forces, and I am grateful for the military families who stand behind them.

I want to thank General Fraser and his wife, Rena. I appreciate Brigadier General Hawk Carlisle—kind of sounds like a general, Hawk Carlisle. [*Laughter*] I appreciate Craig Christensen and Hazen Baron.

I want to thank Senator Lisa Murkowski for flying all the way from Washington today to make sure she was here to see her fellow Alaskans as well as to be with the President. It means a lot to me. I don't know if you know this or not, but after this speech, she said, "Make sure you keep it short," because she's got to fly back to Washington this evening to make important votes for the people of Alaska. Lisa, thank you for your service. She's doing a fine