

(July 12, 2006) Addressing Concerns With Medicare Prescription Drug Program

I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to address the House for one minute.

Mr. Speaker, the Government Accountability Office recently released a report showing that Medicare providers are failing our seniors when it comes to providing information about their prescription drug coverage.

The phone centers operated by private Medicare providers gave accurate and complete answers on only one-third of the calls. On more than half the calls inaccurate or incomplete information was given, and on 15% of calls no information was provided. (Two providers gave inaccurate or incomplete answers three out of four times.)

It is absolutely inexcusable that providers seem to be incapable or unwilling to provide beneficiaries with good information. Our seniors should not be treated like this. Medicare must guarantee that these providers give accurate and complete information.

But these findings also demonstrate another problem. If Medicare providers do not yet understand these plans, how can we expect seniors to. Congress must act to give seniors more time to sign up for a drug plan without suffering the life-long penalty that is now being imposed. Seniors should also be given the option of changing plans immediately if their current plan is not working for them.

Mr. Speaker, we must do better for our seniors.