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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3602
March 27, 2009

Louis M. Ambrose
5235 Westview Drive, Suite 100
Frederick, MD 21703

Dear Louis:

Thank you for writing to share your concerns with me about the future of Social Security and Medicare. Like you, I have serious concerns that any proposal to replace our current, trusted Social Security system with private retirement accounts threatens to break the promise made to all Americans - guaranteeing them dignity and independence during retirement. I am also concerned that the Medicare system is becoming increasingly confusing and difficult for seniors to navigate.

Social Security is a great American success story, having reduced the percentage of our nation's retirees living in poverty from over 50% to 11% since its inception in 1935. Although Social Security faces challenges today, it is not in crisis. It is critical for Congress to face the challenges and work to keep Social Security solvent as well as strengthen it for generations to come. We should not dismantle the program entirely, putting the retirement investments of millions of American workers in risky private accounts.

I strongly oppose the privatization of Social Security for a number of reasons. I believe our first step toward strengthening Social Security involves returning to fiscal responsibility by reducing our national debt. Recent proposals to privatize would add nearly \$2 trillion to the national debt, which could cut benefits for future retirees by more than forty percent. The Social Security program enjoys a success record spanning seventy years, and I assure you that I will work to protect and strengthen Social Security while in Congress.

As for Medicare, I am concerned that the number of choices and the limited guidance available to beneficiaries has caused confusion among seniors. In Oklahoma, there are 56 different prescription drug plans being offered by 23 different companies. A list of these plans and their details can be found on the website www.medicare.gov. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) should have sent anyone receiving Medicare information about these programs. Each plan must cover at least two drugs in every category, and seniors should discuss their prescription needs with their doctor before choosing a plan to ensure that the prescriptions they need are included in the plan.

Medicare is an extremely important program for seniors today and has become even more important with the sharply rising cost of health care. I assure you that I am committed to ensuring the proper funding and long-term viability of this program for generations to come, including addressing the high cost of prescription drugs available to seniors.

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On December 8, 2003, the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) was signed into law by President Bush and established a prescription drug benefit for Medicare beneficiaries under Part D, which began on January 1, 2006. While I was not in Congress when this law was enacted, I have had many concerns about this program, including the cost of prescription medications because, for many seniors living on a fixed income, the cost of medications is a substantial portion of their budget.

One of the provisions of MMA forbids the Secretary of Health and Human Services from interfering with drug price negotiations between manufacturers and Medicare drug plan sponsors, and from instituting a formulary or price structure for the prescription drugs. House Leadership proposed changes that would give the Secretary the authority to negotiate prices through a number of approaches in hopes of securing lower prices, a wider variety of choices, and lower program expenditures. H.R. 4, The Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007, was brought to a vote on January 12, 2007. I voted in favor of this legislation because I want Oklahoma seniors to have access to their prescription drugs at the best possible prices and believe that price negotiations are a step in that direction for the Medicare program.

Rest assured that I will continually monitor these issues in the 110th Congress and will continue to fight to protect these programs from changes that would have a detrimental effect on seniors. Thank you again for taking the time to express your thoughts on these important issues. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Boren', written in a cursive style.

Dan Boren
Member of Congress

DDB: scs