

The National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Inc.

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• **Recent Congressional Action Related to the Social Security Program**

Below is a compilation of recent congressional action related to the Social Security Program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would like us to provide additional information regarding any of the measures.

H.R.3560

Title: To amend the temporary assistance to needy families program under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act to provide grants for transitional jobs programs, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Rep Schakowsky, Janice D. [IL-9] (introduced 11/20/2003) **Cosponsors:** 12

Latest Major Action: 11/20/2003 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S.1878

Title: A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to preserve and strengthen the Social Security program through the creation of personal retirement accounts funded by employer and employee Social Security payroll deductions, to restore the solvency of the old-age survivors, and disability insurance programs, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Sen. Graham, Lindsey O. [SC] (introduced 11/18/2003) **Cosponsors:** (none)

Latest Major Action: 11/18/2003 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance.

S.1889

Title: A bill to amend titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act to permit States to cover low-income youth up to age 23 with an enhanced matching rate.

Sponsor: Sen. Lincoln, Blanche [AR] (introduced 11/19/2003) **Cosponsors:** 1

Latest Major Action: 11/19/2003 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance.

• **Recent Congressional Action Related To Civil Service Issues**

Below is a compilation of recent congressional action related to civil service issues. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would like us to provide additional information regarding any of the measures.

Congressman **Gil Gutknecht** (R-Minnesota) mentioned the FEHBP while speaking about Medicare reform on the House floor (from the *Congressional Record*, 11/17/03, p. H11196).

“Now, the sponsors are going to say, well, wait a second, Congressman *Gutknecht*, we are going to create these systems, sort of like the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan, and that is going to bring down and hold down the price of prescription drugs. Well, we have some evidence of just how well the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan does in terms of lowering the cost of prescription drugs. Let me give some examples.

For example, the Blue Cross/Blue Shield plan that services Federal employees, they do get a discount on Coumadin. I mentioned here that Coumadin, at the retail price in the United States, can be \$90, or \$89.95. Well, the Blue Cross/Blue Shield plan does not pay \$89.95. They get a discount. They buy it for \$55.31. The Mail Handlers Plan, however, does not get their drugs for \$55, they pay \$72.24. My colleagues, you can buy that same drug off the shelf in Munich, Germany, at the Munich Airport pharmacy, for \$21. In other words, the Blue Cross/Blue Shield plan pays more than double what the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Federal Employees Benefit Plan does.

And it goes on. Take Glucophage. We talked about Glucophage. Well, this is in a different quantity. We are talking about a larger prescription. But the Glucophage they are buying using the Federal Employees Benefit Plan, they buy it for \$90 for the Blue Cross/Blue Shield plan. The Mail Handlers pay \$118. The HMO plan, they get a heck of a deal, they buy it for \$18.30. But you can buy it right off the shelf in Germany for \$22 for that exact same drug.

And the story goes on with all of the plans. And Members, do not take my word for it. This is information that was done by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. *Istook*) and his subcommittee staff, where they did some comparisons about what we pay even through the Federal Employees Benefit Plan versus prices off the shelf in Canada, in Europe, and other industrialized countries. And the answer is that in every category we pay a lot more, even with the discounts that we get for the Federal employees.”

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