



# Kansas Insurance Department

**Sandy Praeger**

COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Commissioner Sandy Praeger Issues Statement Calling On President For Help With Medicare Drug Plan**

TOPEKA, KS. We have serious problems with Medicare Part D. As you know, the Medicare Prescription Drug Program was signed into law by President Bush in 2003; it was the first major expansion of the Medicare program since its inception in the mid-60's. The Plan holds much promise and I salute the President for his leadership on this issue.

However, experience has now shown us that we need to modify Part D. My office and other government offices have been receiving hundreds of phone calls. Virtually all of the problems I am hearing about relate to the January 1, 2006 sign up bottleneck. Here is a list of the most common issues:

- Beneficiary has submitted an application, but has still not received a card or other confirmation of coverage.
- Phone lines have been clogged, with people reporting being on hold for hours. Those who have left voicemails are not getting call-backs. We've heard of this happening with calls to the Part D carriers, as well as calls to 1-800-MEDICARE.
- Beneficiaries who have an ID card, but the pharmacy is unable to confirm the coverage via computer.
- Dual eligibles are being charged deductibles or co-pays. \*
- Dual eligibles are not in the pharmacist's computer. \*
- People are being limited on the number of doses in a refill (14 days vs. 30).

Today, on behalf of our Kansas consumers, I am urging the President, to promote legislation in the Congress that would delay the implementation of that part of Medicare Part D that would penalize Medicare beneficiaries for not signing up for the program by May 15, 2006.

Under the current federal regulations, anyone who is eligible now that does not sign up by the May 15 deadline will pay 1% more for each month they delay. Given the issues we now face, that would be unfair and would create yet another logjam that could overwhelm the system.

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To ensure that I have the ability to act on behalf of Kansas beneficiaries, today in the Kansas Senate I requested the introduction of legislation that would require plans to register with the Kansas Insurance Department, giving us the ability to advocate for our senior consumers on problems related to Medicare Part D.

It is my hope that by working together we can find ways to improve upon this program, which does add new very important benefits to our Medicare program. To all Kansas seniors, I say please call my office at 1-800-432-2484 and I will help you in anyway I can.

\* Dual eligibles are individuals over 65 who are eligible for Medicare and because of their income they are also eligible for Medicaid.

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**About the Kansas Insurance Commissioner**

Sandy Praeger, Kansas Insurance Commissioner, oversees the activities of the Kansas Insurance Department (KID) which is headquartered in Topeka, Kansas. The overriding objective of Commissioner Praeger and KID is to protect consumers, and help maintain the financial stability of the insurance industry. KID regulates and monitors the activities of 23,000 resident agents, 48,000 non-resident agents and 1684 insurance companies licensed to do business in the state of Kansas. The Department offers financial, actuarial, legal, computer, research, market conduct and economic expertise. Visit [www.ksinsurance.org](http://www.ksinsurance.org) for more information.