



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INSURANCE COMMISSIONERS

July 11, 2006

**EXECUTIVE  
HEADQUARTERS**

2301 MCGEE STREET  
SUITE 800  
KANSAS CITY MO  
64108-2662  
VOICE 816-842-3600  
FAX 816-783-8175

**FEDERAL AND  
INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS**

HALL OF THE STATES  
444 NORTH CAPITOL ST NW  
SUITE 701  
WASHINGTON DC  
20001-1509  
VOICE 202-624-7790  
FAX 202-624-8579

**SECURITIES  
VALUATION  
OFFICE**

1411 BROADWAY  
9<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
NEW YORK NY  
10018-3402  
VOICE 212-398-9000  
FAX 212-382-4207

**WORLD  
WIDE WEB**

[www.naic.org](http://www.naic.org)

The Honorable Michael Leavitt  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The new Medicare Part D program is the most significant and ambitious expansion of the Medicare program since its creation. While millions of seniors have already benefited from this new coverage option, others have had difficulty understanding their choices and selecting the prescription drug plan that best meets their medical and financial needs. As the Medicare Part D roll out continues, the nation's state insurance regulators recognize the valuable role that the nation's Senior Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs) have played in guiding America's seniors through the process of selecting a plan and enrolling in the Part D program. For this reason, we urge you to provide sufficient funding and resources to support their ongoing role in providing effective education, counseling and outreach services to Medicare beneficiaries throughout the country.

The National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) represents the insurance regulators in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four U.S. territories. A primary objective of insurance regulators is to ensure consumers are thoroughly informed about their insurance choices before they purchase coverage. We know that this is difficult and expensive work, but we believe consumer education is critical for the financial security and peace-of-mind of the consumer.

We recommend that at least \$1 for each Medicare beneficiary be provided to the SHIPs in fiscal years 2007 and 2008 to fund their vital education initiatives. This is a relatively small investment to make for the critical services the SHIPs provide for our nation's seniors. We also urge the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide the necessary training and technical assistance to SHIP staff and volunteers so they can provide full and accurate information to those seeking assistance.

State insurance regulators understand the importance of consumer education. We urge the Department to grant this modest request and provide SHIPs with the necessary resources to assist Medicare beneficiaries as they continue to take advantage of this important program. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jorge Gomez  
Chair, NAIC Senior Issues (B) Task Force  
Insurance Commissioner, State of Wisconsin