

News From  
**SENATOR LINCOLN CHAFEE**  
**RHODE ISLAND**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**CHAFEE VOTES FOR PRESCRIPTION  
DRUG BENEFIT**

***Bipartisan Majority approves Historic Benefit Package***

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee joined a diverse, bipartisan group of Senators in voting to approve a prescription drug benefit to be added to the Medicare program. This historic vote approves legislation that has failed since 1998.

“I made a pledge to work toward a drug benefit that would assist many Rhode Islanders in paying for prescription drugs,” Chafee said. “I am pleased that we have taken this first step in providing drug benefits to many Rhode Islanders. I understand the disappointment of some who feel that the benefits are not more comprehensive. I will continue to work with my colleagues with the hope that a bill that offers more of the benefits that our seniors need will come out of the conference committee.” Chafee continued.

Medicare is a nationwide health insurance program that offers health insurance protection for forty million older Americans and disabled persons. The program provides broad coverage of many, primarily acute, health services. The prescription drug benefit passed today in the Senate creates both a drug benefit and a new role for private health plans in Medicare.

The plan offers immediate assistance to Medicare beneficiaries using a drug discount card for years 2004 and 2005. In addition, low-income beneficiaries would receive an additional \$600 subsidy annually to assist with the purchase of drugs. The discount card will expire in 2005.

Beginning in 2006, the bill establishes a voluntary drug benefit that is integrated with other benefits for those opting to enroll in private-sector health plans. For beneficiaries choosing to stay in the traditional Medicare program, the benefits would be provided through private “drug only” insurance plans