

and those approaching retirement to understand their new benefits. This coming spring, seniors will receive a letter to explain the drug discount card. In June, these cards, including the \$600 annual drug credit for low-income seniors, will be activated. This drug card can be used through the end of 2005. In the fall of that year, seniors will receive an information booklet giving simple guidance on changes in the program and the new choices they will have. Then in January of 2006, seniors will have their new coverage, including permanent coverage for prescription drugs.

These reforms are the act of a vibrant and compassionate Government. We show our concern for the dignity of our seniors by giving them quality health care. We show our respect for seniors by giving them more choices and more control over their decision-making. We're putting individuals in charge of their health care decisions. And as we move to modernize and reform other programs of this Government, we will always trust individuals and their decisions and put personal choice at the heart of our efforts.

The challenges facing seniors on Medicare were apparent for many years, and those years passed with much debate and a lot of politics and little reform to show for it. And that changed with the 108th Congress. This year we met our challenge with focus and perseverance. We confronted problems, instead of passing them along to future administrations and future Congresses. We overcame old partisan differences. We kept our promise and found a way to get the job done. This legislation is the achievement of Members in both political parties. And this legislation is a victory for all of America's seniors.

Now I'm honored and pleased to sign this historic piece of legislation, the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. at DAR Constitution Hall. H.R. 1, approved December 8, was assigned Public Law No. 108-173. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003

December 8, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 1, the "Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003." The Act helps achieve a more modern Medicare system that includes prescription drug coverage and choices for seniors.

Sections 1012 and 1014 of the Act create a commission and a working group, both with most of their members designated by Members of Congress or the Comptroller General, a legislative agent. Sections 1012(h)(3) and 1014(j)(3) purport to give the commission and the working group a right to secure directly from executive departments and agencies information they seek to perform their duties. The executive branch shall construe these provisions in a manner consistent with the constitutional authorities of the President to supervise the unitary executive branch and to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair the deliberative processes of the Executive or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

Section 802 of the Act calls for the President to submit to the Congress proposals for legislation in the event that a Medicare funding warning is issued under section 801(a)(2). Many other provisions in the Act, including sections 101(b), 109(d)(2), 410A(e), 434(f), 507(c)(3), 645(a)(2), 649(g), 651(d)(2), 911(f), and 1014(o), also call for executive branch officials to submit to the Congress proposals for legislation. The executive branch shall construe these provisions in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 8, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 1, approved December 8, was assigned Public Law No. 108-173.