

106<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
2<sup>D</sup> SESSION

# H. R. 4797

To amend title XI of the Social Security Act to direct the Commissioner of Social Security to conduct outreach efforts to increase awareness of the availability of Medicare cost-sharing assistance to eligible low-income Medicare beneficiaries.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 29, 2000

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky (for himself and Mr. FLETCHER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Commerce, 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

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## A BILL

To amend title XI of the Social Security Act to direct the Commissioner of Social Security to conduct outreach efforts to increase awareness of the availability of Medicare cost-sharing assistance to eligible low-income Medicare beneficiaries.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Low-Income Widows  
5 Assistance Act of 2000”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress makes the following findings:

3 (1) Since 1988, 3 cost-sharing payment pro-  
4 grams that provide certain low-income elderly and  
5 disabled individuals with financial assistance in cov-  
6 ering medicare beneficiary costs under title XVIII of  
7 the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.)  
8 have been established by law.

9 (2) While eligibility for medicare cost-sharing  
10 assistance has expanded, and while the Social Secu-  
11 rity Administration, the Health Care Financing Ad-  
12 ministration, and State agencies are working coop-  
13 eratively to identify and implement reforms to cure  
14 the chronic deficiencies associated with the programs  
15 described in paragraph (1), reports have shown that  
16 gaps in beneficiary knowledge and deficiencies in  
17 program administration by Federal and State agen-  
18 cies present persistent barriers to enrolling eligible  
19 beneficiaries in such programs.

20 (3) The financial plight of social security and  
21 medicare beneficiaries who experience critical income  
22 shifts due to the death of a spouse is of particular  
23 concern. Statistics furnished by the Social Security  
24 Administration show that 40 percent of nonmarried  
25 women (a category that includes widows) rely on so-  
26 cial security benefits for 90 percent of their income

1 in comparison to only 18 percent of married couples.  
2 Further, nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  of nonmarried women rely on so-  
3 cial security retirement benefits as their sole source  
4 of income.

5 (4) While current reform proposals concentrate  
6 on reaching potential eligible beneficiaries upon ini-  
7 tial enrollment in social security or medicare, the fi-  
8 nancial vulnerability of widowed spouses can arise at  
9 any time after a senior has begun to receive retire-  
10 ment benefits.

11 (5) Nearly every legislative proposal to provide  
12 an outpatient prescription drug benefit under the  
13 medicare program would provide additional financial  
14 assistance to medicare beneficiaries who currently  
15 qualify for assistance under medicare cost-sharing  
16 programs.

17 **SEC. 3. OUTREACH EFFORTS.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title XI of the Social Security Act  
19 (42 U.S.C. 1301 et seq.) is amended by inserting after  
20 section 1143 the following new section:

21 “OUTREACH EFFORTS TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE  
22 AVAILABILITY OF MEDICARE COST-SHARING

23 “SEC. 1144. (a) OUTREACH.—

24 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commissioner of So-  
25 cial Security (in this section referred to as the ‘Com-  
26 missioner’) shall conduct outreach efforts to—

1           “(A) identify individuals entitled to bene-  
2           fits under the medicare program under title  
3           XVIII who may be eligible for medical assist-  
4           ance for payment of the cost of medicare cost-  
5           sharing under the medicaid program pursuant  
6           to sections 1902(a)(10)(E) and 1933; and

7           “(B) notify such individuals of the avail-  
8           ability of such medical assistance under such  
9           sections.

10          “(2) CONTENT OF NOTICE.—Any notice fur-  
11          nished under paragraph (1) shall state that eligi-  
12          bility for medicare cost-sharing assistance under  
13          such sections is conditioned upon the individual pro-  
14          viding an accurate statement as to whether or not  
15          the individual has tax-exempt income, and, if so, the  
16          amount of such income and, in the case of an indi-  
17          vidual residing in a State that imposes an asset test  
18          for such eligibility, the amount of countable assets  
19          the individual has.

20          “(b) COORDINATION WITH STATES.—

21                 “(1) IN GENERAL.—In conducting the outreach  
22          efforts under this section, the Commissioner shall—

23                         “(A) furnish the appropriate agency of  
24                         each State with information consisting of the  
25                         identity of individuals residing in the State that

1 the Commissioner determines are or may be eli-  
2 gible for medical assistance for payment of the  
3 cost of medicare cost-sharing under the med-  
4 icaid program pursuant to sections  
5 1902(a)(10)(E) and 1933; and

6 “(B) update any such information not less  
7 frequently than once per year.

8 “(2) INFORMATION IN PERIODIC UPDATES.—

9 The periodic updates described in paragraph (1)(B)  
10 shall include information on individuals who are or  
11 may be eligible for the medical assistance described  
12 in paragraph (1)(A) because such individuals have  
13 experienced reductions in benefits under title II.”.

14 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by  
15 subsection (a) shall take effect one year after the date of  
16 the enactment of this Act.

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