



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

Please join us for lunch
MONDAY, November 27, 2006

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Miyama Main Hall, Harris United Methodist Church
Nuuanu Ave. and South Vineyard Blvd.
Ample parking - driveway off Nuuanu Ave.

AGENDA:

- 11:30 Luncheon: Tofu Spinach Lasagna (Vegan); Chicken Devino, with mushroom & artichoke hearts, brown rice, salad, Dessert by Eloise. \$5.00 donation
- 11:45 Welcome, Introductions and Remarks, *Larry Geller, President*
- 12:00 **Program: Lot Lau, Elderly Affairs Division of City and County of Honolulu: "Kupuna Care,"**
One of the few programs that help with services for seniors above the poverty level. See below.

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM NOTE ON LAST MONTH'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES BALLOT: "I had a knee replacement and surgery one and a half years ago at S----- VERY painful. I was sent home to fend for myself! I live alone, have NO children, no nurse, no nurse aide or companion came to help me. Why? It was awful. Now I am scheduled to have the other knee done. P.S. I have fallen on my back at home 5 times." *Edna Shea*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: 10:00 A.M. PRECEEDING LUNCH

AMERICANS UNITED SHINES LIGHT ON DOUGHNUT HOLE PROBLEM

The report by the Campaign for America's Future found that the average Medicare-eligible American will fall into the doughnut hole on September 22 this year. Additionally, the doughnut hole coverage gap, which currently affects those with annual drug costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100, will increase over time as the catastrophic coverage threshold rises annually, swallowing up more seniors. As a result, 55 percent of those who enter the doughnut hole will not be able to escape it.

I was reading your latest newsletter and want to correct some things in "September Notes: WOMEN BEHIND BARS." The second sentence sounds like all 600 women are incarcerated for drugs. Although the majority is, it is not all. And they used to have only 15 treatment beds...NOW THEY HAVE 64!

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to speak before the Council. *Kat Brady*

MEDICARE PRIVATIZATION IN DEEP TROUBLE

Luis Hestres, eAdvocacy Coordinator, Families USA

A new report: **Medicare Privatization: Windfall for the Special Interests** chronicles the failures of the MMA in three key areas: Medicare Advantage overpayments, subsidies to regional PPO's, and drug prices. Among the key findings:

- **Under the MMA, Medicare has been significantly overpaying private plans under Medicare Advantage.** In 2005, Medicare overpaid private plans by at least **7% per beneficiary**, costing taxpayers: **\$2.7 billion**. In 2006, overpayment reached **11% per beneficiary**, costing taxpayers **\$4.6 billion**.
- **Under the MMA, Congress set aside \$10 billion for an unnecessary subsidy (or "stabilization fund") to regional PPO's.** This year, however, **88% of beneficiaries** have access to a regional PPO, before the so-called "stabilization fund" was even tapped—no subsidy was necessary.
- **Medicare Part D drug prices are substantially higher than the prices obtained by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA),** which negotiates prices on behalf of consumers. For all of the top 20 drugs prescribed to seniors, the lowest price charged by any Part D plan was higher than the lowest price secured by the VA. Yet Congress refused to let Medicare negotiate directly with the drug companies, as the VA does.

Bottom line: this report shows that, unfortunately for consumers and taxpayers, the MMA has not even come close to meeting the high expectations set for it by Congress. Consumers are getting hurt and taxpayers fleeced, while insurance companies and drug manufacturers are raking in money faster than they can count it. Congress needs to move away from this deeply flawed privatization model, and instead focus on strengthening Medicare.

QUARTER OF AMERICANS SAY THEY OR FAMILY PUT OFF MEDICAL TREATMENT BECAUSE OF COST

KAISER FOUNDATION—One in four Americans say that they or a family member in their household had problems paying medical bills during the past 12 months, according to a new poll conducted jointly by ABC News, the Kaiser Family Foundation and USA Today. That's the highest share of Americans reporting a problem paying medical bills in a series of Kaiser surveys taken since 1997. Among those reporting a problem this year, nearly seven in 10 have health insurance.

- About one in four (28%) Americans say that in the past year they or a family member have put off medical treatment because of its cost. Of those who delayed treatment, seven in 10 (70%) say that the care was for a serious medical condition.

- Among those with health insurance, most (60%) are worried about not being able to afford coverage over

the next few years, with 27% saying they are very worried.

- More than half (54%) of those without health coverage say the main reason is because they can't afford it, while another 15% say they can't get it due to poor health, illness or age. In comparison, just 4% say the main reason they lack health insurance is because they think they don't need it.

- Eight in 10 Americans (80%) say they are dissatisfied with the overall cost of health care to the nation. When asked about their own concerns about the health care system, cost comes out far ahead of quality. Four in 10 say that they are dissatisfied with their personal health care costs, compared with one in 10 who say they are dissatisfied with the quality of their health care.

JULIE APPLEBY, USA TODAY—In a recent survey, fifty-six percent say they would prefer universal coverage to the current system. In the survey, 68% said providing coverage for everyone is more important than keeping taxes down. When survey respondents were asked about possible trade-offs that might come with a universal program, positive responses plummeted. The poll found: 76% would oppose universal coverage if it meant some medical treatments currently covered by insurance would no longer be covered. 68% would be against it if it led to limits on the choice of doctors.

NOTES FROM THIRD ANNUAL COMMUNITY FORUM – OCTOBER 23, 2006

The third annual Kokua Council Community Legislative Forum brought together representatives of government and community organizations to discuss community needs and concerns and to share ideas for legislative action in the coming legislative session. The Forum helps Kokua Council identify those issues that should have top priority for our organization. And, finally, the Forum is a way to encourage organizations to work together to achieve common goals and objectives. Kokua Council will continue to support past issues that are still pending.

Rep. Cynthia Thielen: U.S. Senate Candidate. Need to develop our natural resources to replace dependency on fossil fuels especially oil. The two billion a year the Hawaii spends on this fuel could be kept here if we developed the use of renewable energy from water, wind and the sun. The savings would help pay for local jobs, improve environment, fund more senior programs and support education.

Sen. Les Ihara, Co-chair of Kupuna Caucus and Joint legislative Committee on Caregiving: Goals are to support training for caregivers and Long Term Care workers, expand services for in-home care and aging in place, financial incentives for caregivers and having maximum impact on the legislature. The planning calendar lists: 12/1/06 to review proposed legislation, 12/15 prioritizes legislation, 1/5 review bills. There will be another printing of *Aging Issues, A Briefing Guide for the Hawaii State Legislature*.

Pat Sasaki, Director, Hawaii Executive Office on Aging (EOA): The growth of the aging population is creating more demand for aging services. Higher costs on existing services, changes in the Older Americans Act lowering the age of covered population from 60 to 55, new unfunded federally mandated programs is increasing pressure on the department. EOA is developing a "1-Stop Access" for LTC services. The EOA urges seniors to get involved in the legislative process and support bills and initiatives that will best serve the fast growing aging population.

Harry Mattson, AARP State Director for Advocacy: AARP supports Universal Health Care, a freeze on credit reports, an aging in place tax credit for house improvements, ridding the State Prescription Assistance Program of the asset test (now \$36,000 cap for single people), the one stop access to long term care information, refundable tax credit and training for caregivers, energy saving measures and finally to organize seniors as one voice.

Marya Grambs, Director, Mental Health Association: The Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) for mental health residents in care homes has been averaging \$30/month for many years. This sum is insufficient to cover clothing, haircuts, toiletries, transportation and any recreation and should be raised to \$50/month as is now current in most states.

Karen Miyake, Director, Elderly Affairs Division (EAD): Department is struggling with staff and volunteer shortages while population they serve is increasing. Providers are overburdened and under funded. EAD needs to expand outreach, housing, health education, mental health services and need more funding for this.

Bruce McCullough, Legislative Chair, Hawaii Alliance of Retired Americans (HARA): Legislative goals for 2007 are support for family caregivers, increased community based care, prescription drug costs, affordable housing, transportation, affordable LTC insurance. Senior groups must work together.

Jeanne Ohta, Drug Policy Forum of Hawaii (DPFH): Drug policy affects everyone. DPFH wants to improve the medical marijuana program, decriminalize possession of less than 1 ounce of marijuana and oppose drug testing of teachers.

Laurie Paleca, LTC Ombudsman's Office: Needs more funds to base a part-time LTC Ombudsman on neighbor islands. Local staff would decrease current travel expenses while increasing access and better understanding of community and culture. They expect this to impact quality of life and decrease elder abuse.

Patty Johnson, Director, Adult & Community Services DHS: Examining present Adult & Protective Services Law with view for change in 1 year. Civil penalties are needed. Other ways to decrease abuse is to increase prevention and awareness, provide more services for elderly and respite for caregivers.

From our members: New bus stops too far for fragile elderly. New housing is being built for the rich, driving up taxes. Higher conveyance taxes would slow speculation. Funding for Voter Owned Elections could come from unclaimed property. Have Advance Directives on-line. Not enough time for low income people to apply for tax credits on property. Free early childhood education would raise competency by 3rd grade. Establish a new legislative committee devoted to elder issues.

Next month: results of balloting.



c/o Harris United Methodist Church
 20 South Vineyard Blvd.
 Honolulu, HI 96813

Who Are We?

The **Kokua Council** is one of Hawaii’s oldest advocacy groups. There is a \$5 annual membership to defray printing and postage costs. At each meeting, topical issues are presented for discussion and possible action. We embrace diversity and extend a special invitation to any senior or intergenerational minded individual interested in advocating for these important issues in Hawaii.” All are welcome. **WHEN** 4th Monday of every month, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. **WHERE** Harris United Methodist Church @ Nuuanu and Vineyard Blvd., Ample parking and a light lunch are provided for \$5. **REACH US** c/o Harris United Methodist Church, 20 South Vineyard, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Mission: “Kokua Council seeks to empower seniors and other concerned citizens to be effective advocates in shaping the future and well-being of our community, with particular attention to those needing help in advocating for themselves. “

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JOIN KOKUA COUNCIL!

Yes! I want to join Kokua Council. Here are my annual dues and my contact information. I understand that my phone number will be added to the Kokua Phone Tree and I will receive the monthly newsletter and occasional e-mails. Our fiscal year starts in January. Please make checks payable to Kokua Council.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS _____ **LIFE MEMBER** _____ **ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS** _____
 _____\$5.00 _____\$100.00 _____\$25.00 **DONATIONS**_____

Name _____ Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Mail to: Treasurer, Kokua Council, Harris United Methodist Church, 20 S. Vineyard Blvd.,
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