

*Protecting Programs Critical to Seniors' Health and Financial Security*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – House Democratic Caucus Seniors Task Force Co-Chairs Reps. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Doris Matsui (D-CA) sent a letter to members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction yesterday to reject proposals that would reduce benefits to programs for older Americans and cut Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security in a way that worsens financial and health risks of senior citizens at a time of economic hardship.

Currently, one in four older Americans have lost all retirement savings and 3 million seniors are living below the \$11,000 federal poverty level. Congress should ask seniors and other lower-income and middle-income families to sacrifice without requiring millionaires and billionaires, oil companies and corporate outsourcers to pay their fair share.

The letter calls on members of the “Super Committee” to ensure that at least 50% of the total package required under the Budget Control Act will come from revenues, any reductions in Medicare and Medicaid spending come from efficiencies rather than cost-shifting, and savings will be used to provide adequate provider payments needed to ensure access.

“I hope that the members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction will push for real reforms – reforms that work – and not cut our bedrock programs that ensure financial security for seniors,” said **Rep. Schakowsky**. “We need to find savings in health care that promote wellness, reduce unnecessary care, and lower drug prices. We should not throw up financial barriers that save money by denying people the care they need. We can avoid burdening seniors only if we ensure that revenues are a significant part of the solution – at least 50% of any deficit reduction proposal.”

“As the Super Committee considers policy options to reduce our nation’s debt, it is critical that the members of the Committee understand the full weight of their proposals,” said **Rep. Matsui**. “That is why I firmly reject the premise that we must undermine our nation’s social safety net in order to reduce the deficit – especially in the absence of a balanced approach. Programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security are making the difference in the lives of my constituents – and millions of Americans – all across the country. We must stand-up for those who have paid their fair share and played by the rules their entire life by making good on the promise of a safe and secure retirement, and access to high-quality, affordable health care.”

The letter encourages the Select Committee to examine real, viable ways to save money over 10 years in lieu of harmful cuts by extending Medicaid prescription drug rebates to qualified low-income Medicare beneficiaries (\$135 billion in savings), allowing CMS to negotiate Medicare Part D prescription drug prices directly with pharmaceutical manufacturers (\$156 billion in savings), and prohibiting so-called “pay for delay” practices, in which brand name biologic manufacturers enter into agreements with generic manufacturers to delay production of generic products (\$2.7 billion in savings).

The Committee could also look at ways to further combat Medicare fraud and abuse as well as consider a public option for the health insurance exchanges that could save the federal government \$88 billion over 10 years.

The letter further calls on the Committee to reject proposals that would reduce Social Security benefits, raise the age of eligibility for Social Security or Medicare, increase Medicare cost-sharing burdens, establish means testing in Medicare or reduce federal Medicaid assistance.

Deep federal cuts would threaten these critical services while leaving seniors and their families with crushing financial burdens they cannot afford. American seniors who have paid into these programs deserve better.

*For more information on the Democratic Caucus Seniors Task Force, visit [dems.gov/seniors](https://dems.gov/seniors).*

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( [Click here for link to the letter](#) )

