

Governor Encourages Seniors To Sign Up For Drug Coverage

**By Steve Miller**

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Governor Blagojevich says senior citizens need to act now, if they haven't already, to sign up for both state and federal prescription drug coverage.

The governor appeared at North Park Village Senior Center on the Northwest side Monday. North Park Village residents are already organized and informed about the to sign up for federal Medicare drug coverage and the Illinois Cares Rx supplemental program.

It was seniors elsewhere that the governor spoke out to try to reach.

"We've been able to help more than 240,000 seniors, who would otherwise lose coverage, be able to have coverage, and there's still about another 130- to 150,000 senior citizens that we need to find."

And Blagojevich says that's just people who haven't signed up for the Illinois program - designed to supplement what the federal program leaves out.

The deadline for signing up for the federal Medicare drug plan is May 15.

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky appeared with Governor Blagojevich at the senior center. Schakowsky has introduced a bill that would extend the deadline for signing up for the federal drug plan from May 15 to January 2007.

Schakowsky says more than a million seniors nationwide would benefit from the deadline extension. She says the choices are so overwhelming and confusing that even the parents of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt made a wrong move - after Leavitt helped them.

Schakowsky says she hopes President Bush will change his mind - and support a deadline extension.