



MEDIA ADVISORY

June 13, 2007

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**Rally in support of SeniorCare
scheduled for June 14 in Anchorage**

ANCHORAGE, AK – Seniors and advocates for low-income seniors are scheduled to carry signs and join in a public rally in support of Alaska’s “SeniorCare” program Thursday, June 14 at 11:30 a.m. at 121 W. Fireweed Lane, Anchorage.

SeniorCare provides \$120 a month to low-income seniors (singles over 65 with annual incomes of less than \$16,133 and couples with annual incomes of less than \$21,641). Most recipients use the benefit for utilities, food, rent, or medications.

Recipients of the assistance program as well as senior advocates are expected to make comments. Legislators have also been invited to attend.

WHAT: Public rally in support of the SeniorCare program
WHERE: Access Alaska Offices, on the corner of “A” and W. Fireweed
WHEN: Thursday, June 14, 2007 from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm
WHO: Seniors and senior advocates
NOTE: Background information on back of page

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Legislature left Juneau without addressing the SeniorCare program. Without some action, the SeniorCare program will die at the end of this month. Over 6,700 older Alaskans will lose this benefit.

Who benefits from SeniorCare? There are five primary categories:

- ***Older women:*** Research indicates that many of the people who are signing up for SeniorCare are women who were lower income at 64 and, finally at 65, they are eligible for some assistance from the state. Very often these women did have assets and savings but used them to pay for the health care costs of a now deceased spouse.
- ***Alaskans who simply were not paid that much when they were working.*** Many lower paid workers simply are not able to accumulate much and are more likely to be receiving minimal Social Security benefits and have no pension coverage.
- ***Rural Alaskans, especially those who live subsistence lifestyles.*** These individuals are least likely to have cash income. If they receive Social Security, their benefits are very low. Improvements in SeniorCare will bring a strong benefit to older Alaskans living in our remote villages.
- ***The oldest of our citizens.*** Many more people are now living into their 80's and 90's. As they age, they are more likely to find themselves on tighter budgets. No pension or retirement system adequately compensates for inflation, particularly health care costs. Our oldest citizens are the ones who are more likely to spend increasing amounts of their retirement budgets on health.
- ***Many of the former Longevity Bonus recipients who meet the income guidelines.***

The Legislature has called itself back in to special session on June 26 solely to address SeniorCare. They have several options before them:

- They can take no action and let the program die on June 30.
- They can renew the program as is and continue giving \$120 checks monthly to those who qualify (singles over 65 with annual incomes below \$16,133 and couples with annual incomes below \$21,641).
- They can pass SB 4, authored by Senator Donald Olson of Nome, which would significantly improve the program. An additional 1,300 older Alaskans would be eligible and the benefit structure would be tiered:
 - \$175 monthly for singles with incomes below \$12,770 and couples with annual incomes below \$17,120.
 - \$150 monthly for singles with incomes below \$17,240 and couples with annual incomes below \$23,112.
 - \$125 monthly for singles with incomes below \$19,155 and couples with annual incomes below \$25,680.
- They can pass HB 198, authored by Representative Mike Hawker of Anchorage, which would be an even greater improvement over the current program. An additional 4,300 older Alaskans would be eligible and the benefit structure would also be tiered but with much better benefits going to those with the lowest income:
 - \$250 monthly for singles with incomes below \$9,578 and couples with annual incomes below \$12,840.
 - \$175 monthly for singles with incomes below \$12,770 and couples with annual incomes below \$17,120.
 - \$125 monthly for singles with incomes below \$22,348 and couples with annual incomes below \$29,960.