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Sens. Franken, Collins, Rockefeller Press for Billions in Medicare Savings Through Diabetes Prevention

Senators' New Measure Would Allow Beneficiaries to Enroll in Proven Prevention Program

Tuesday, March 5, 2013

Today, U.S. Sens. Al Franken (D-Minn.), Susan Collins (R-Maine), and Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) introduced legislation that could save the federal Medicare program billions of dollars by allowing millions of beneficiaries to take part in a proven diabetes-prevention program.

The Senators' measure would provide Medicare beneficiaries with the National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP), a structured, 16-session program focusing on healthy eating and physical activity that has been shown to reduce the onset of type 2 diabetes in those most at risk for the disease by nearly 60 percent. Diabetes is one of the fastest-growing diseases in the United States; the Centers for Disease Control estimates diabetes cost the nation more than \$116 billion to treat in 2007.

"Hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans struggle with diabetes, and even more are at risk of developing it, but for many people, this costly disease is very preventable," said Sen. Franken. **"Studies show that the National Diabetes Prevention Program is highly effective at stopping the onset of type 2 diabetes. Covering this program through Medicare will help seniors stay healthier and save our taxpayers billions of dollars. It's common sense and win-win."**

"Diabetes accounts for one out of every three Medicare dollars, and these costs are projected only to go up as the population ages," Sen. Collins said. **"Research has shown that these kinds of community-based interventions work and can reduce a pre-diabetic patient's risk of getting the disease by 71 percent in adults over 60. To not provide coverage for these services under Medicare would be penny wise and pound foolish."**

"Reducing diabetes in West Virginia is imperative," said Sen. Rockefeller. **"This bill would use a proven diabetes prevention program to help reduce the prevalence of this disease, and in many cases, help West Virginians avoid it altogether. It also saves billions of dollars as we try to reduce the federal deficit, and it creates jobs by training more workers in the state to implement this program. Up to 75 percent of health care costs in this country are the result of chronic diseases like diabetes. By aggressively working to prevent chronic disease, as this bill would do, we can save lives and save more money in our health care system. This bill would help us make these wishes possible for so many families and I will fight to pass it."**

"The National Diabetes Prevention Program is a practical solution to a preventable epidemic," said Deneen Vojta, Senior Vice President of the UnitedHealth Center for Health Reform and Modernization. "The program has saved three dollars for every dollar invested in it, and expanding access to it will help people live healthier lives as well as contain costs associated with treating diabetes."

More than 24 million Americans suffer from diabetes, including 228,000 Minnesotans. Another 1.2 million

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Minnesotans have pre-diabetes, which can often be reversed through changes in diet and exercise. Studies have shown that the NDPP can decrease the likelihood that individuals with prediabetes will be diagnosed with full-blown type 2 diabetes by 58 percent for individuals over 25 and by 71 percent for seniors over 60.

In 2010, Sen. Franken, along with former Sen. Dick Lugar (R-Ind.), successfully fought to include the Diabetes Prevention Act in the health reform law. Their legislation gave grants to organizations, such as health centers and the YMCA, to fund the NDPP and deliver the program to patients with pre-diabetes throughout the country. The 16-week NDPP helps prevent patients with pre-diabetes from developing type 2 diabetes through a course of exercise and nutrition education. In 2012, Sen. Franken successfully pushed the Department of Veterans Affairs to adopt the Diabetes Prevention Program as a pilot program. Currently, three VA Medical Centers, including the one in Minneapolis, are piloting the Diabetes Prevention Program.

Sen. Franken received the Congressional Champion Award from the YMCA of the USA for his bipartisan work on the Diabetes Prevention Act and his commitment to conquering the disease. To learn more about Sen. Franken's efforts to reduce diabetes in America, please click [here](#).


Last fall, Rockefeller encouraged the West Virginia Bureau of Public Health and the Appalachian Regional Commission to convene a roundtable discussion in Charleston with people from across West Virginia to talk about the state's diabetes prevention efforts. Dr. Ann Albright, a diabetes expert from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, lent her expertise. Key groups and advocates from the public and private sectors - health professionals, insurance companies, state and federal agencies, academics, community leaders, and local groups - shared ideas and questions about ways to combat this disease. And the discussion built on many other efforts that have taken place in state and nationwide.

Sens. Franken, Lugar, and Rockefeller previously [introduced](#) the Medicare Diabetes Prevention Act in 2012. A list of organizations that endorse the Medicare Diabetes Prevention Act of 2013 is available [here](#).

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