

**THE STORY OF GEORGE HARPER: RETIREE, MEDICARE BENEFICIARY**

Washington, DC – George Harper is 73 years old and has been married to his wife Pauline for 52 of those years. They have 7 children, 32 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren. George grew up in a farming family near Mayflower, Arkansas. He spent 15 years in Kansas City working for Ford Motor Co. before moving back to Mayflower, where the Harpers live today within three miles of their many children and grandchildren. Upon retiring from Carrier Air Conditioning, George took over the full-time care of his wife, who is blind and requires regular dialysis treatments.

In July 2007, George received a phone call from a “Mr. Perkins,” who claimed to be a representative of Medicare. He spoke of “new benefits” to which George and Pauline were entitled. Perkins did not disclose that he was an agent for Care Improvement Plus, a Medicare Advantage plan. George told the caller that they were satisfied with their current benefits but the man persisted with talk of new benefits. George finally agreed to allow the man to come to the house, but was resolute in his decision to keep his current plan. Finally, the salesman left forms behind and asked George to call if he changed his mind. The following day a different Care Improvement Plus agent came to their house. George told him that he had already talked with someone the day before and was not interested in changing his plan to one replete with provisions he did not want. The second agent warned George that Perkins might have signed him up anyway.

The following day George resolved to contact Care Improvement Plus, only to discover that he had indeed been signed up against his wishes, his signature forged on the application which was submitted to and accepted by Medicare with an incorrect Social Security number. George and Pauline went through the disenrollment procedures with the plan and with Medicare; it took three months for them to become disenrolled. Premiums for the plan they did not want were deducted from their Social Security checks for July, August, and September. Finally, the Harpers re-enrolled in their original Medicare plan but incurred medical bills in the meantime that have been only partially reimbursed.

MAX BAUCUS SEEKS TO PROTECT SENIORS IN MEDICARE

On Thursday, February 7, 2008, in a hearing before the Senate Committee on Finance, Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) will examine the marketing and sales tactics used on George and Pauline Harper and thousands of Medicare beneficiaries just like them.

“I am deeply concerned that vulnerable Americans are being swindled by agents of some of the private plans in our Medicare program,” said Baucus. **“There is no room for this kind of predatory behavior in the system, and I will find ways to protect seniors from greedy, unethical marketing and sales practices.”**

This is the second of two hearings Baucus is holding on Medicare Advantage as 2008 begins. The first, held last month, examined private fee-for-service plans.

The Chairman’s statement from this hearing may be viewed here:

<http://www.finance.senate.gov/press/Bpress/2008press/prb013008.pdf>

See webcast and witness testimony on the Senate Finance Committee website:

<http://finance.senate.gov/sitepages/hearings.htm>.