

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

**“An Oversight Hearing on Providing Relief to Seniors Who Have
Fallen into the Prescription Drug ‘Donut Hole’**

July 17, 2006

**Mel Kinnison
Huntington Beach, CA**

Thank you Senator Dorgan and members of the Committee.

I have worked most of my life. I served in the Marine Corps, and worked as a Los Angeles Deputy Sheriff, until I retired.

I now live on a small retirement income and Social Security. My two sons, one is 21 and the other is 15, live with me, so I must try and budget my funds to cover my other bills. I'm separated from my wife, but she helps all she can.

I read the brochures sent to me by Medicare, and many other companies regarding the prescription drug Part D program. I received a call from my health insurer who invited me and others to a luncheon to explain Part D to us in simple language.

I have had a good working relationship with my HMO. At the luncheon they explained that enrolling in Medicare Part D would be helpful in my co-pays for my medications.

They further stated that they would see to it that I would be put in the best program that fit me financially—with that, I signed with them. They also said that this would ensure that I would keep the doctor that I have had for years.

I have diabetes, congestive heart problems, a history of strokes and found out that I now have prostate cancer, which has started to grow. My doctors have told me that when the cancer starts to grow I will need to have some sort of radiation and possible chemotherapy. I may have to take some drugs, which I understand are expensive.

I don't know how much of an increase there will be, but since I hit the donut hole I was told that I would be responsible for the next \$2,250 out of my pocket. I don't know how I can come up with that much money, plus the deductible of \$250 every year. This has put a tremendous burden on me and my family.

After a talk with my doctor, he did take me off three medications for a while to try to manage my expenses—he said I should be able to do without them for a little while. But I must have blood tests to see if I can stay off of them or whether staying off these medications may damage my health. These medications were for congestive heart failure and to relieve symptoms of my strokes.

I'm here like the others to appeal to those with the power to change or create a policy that would help seniors with this "donut hole," who basically are going in the hole trying to pay for the needed drugs. There are so many seniors in this situation and in much worse situations that need your help desperately.

Thank you for inviting me and listening to what I have to say.