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**Contact: Carolyn Brandeen, Interim Chair,
Wisconsin Women's Network Task Force on Women and Aging
608-754-7004**

SENIORCARE Rx: IT'S A WOMEN'S ISSUE

SeniorCare has been available to Wisconsin residents age 65 or older for less than a year. But in that time more than 83,000 people have signed up to take advantage of the help SeniorCare offers with the cost of prescription drugs.

Once SeniorCare benefits kick in, participants pay just \$5 for a month's supply of generic drugs, \$15 for a month's supply of brand-name drugs.

Before Wisconsin introduced SeniorCare, many older women living on limited incomes found themselves having to cut back on groceries and other necessities in order to be able to afford their medicines. Even these sacrifices didn't always work. As the cost of prescription drugs continued to rise, people often split their pills or took them on alternate days—anything, in fact, to make prescriptions last longer.

The Wisconsin Women's Network Task Force on Women and Aging worked on the campaign to get SeniorCare approved and opposes any changes in the program that might make it more difficult for participants to get the drugs they need.

According to Task Force member Carolyn Brandeen, recent surveys have shown that Americans of every age regularly skip prescriptions because they can't afford them. More than any other segment of the population, individuals age 65 or more depend on prescription drugs to maintain their health and independence. There's no question that the soaring costs of prescription drugs threaten older people most acutely.

“What's not obvious from all the statistics is how lack of prescription drug coverage is overwhelmingly a women's issue,” Brandeen observes. “73 percent of all SeniorCare participants are women. Most of those women are single or widows. If you raise SeniorCare deductibles by 50 percent, just about three quarters of the people you'll be penalizing are women. It's not as if anyone thinks raising deductibles will make a significant difference in fixing Wisconsin's budget crisis. We should be looking for ways to encourage SeniorCare enrollment, not to discourage it.”

“Remember, too, that SeniorCare actually saves taxpayers money,” Brandeen continues. “Any time people don't follow doctor's orders about medications, they just get sicker, which means they're more likely to need admission to a hospital or to a nursing home. SeniorCare, for the first time, is making it possible for thousands of older Wisconsin women—and men—to purchase the medications they need without depriving themselves of other necessities.”

SENIORCARE Rx: IT'S A WOMEN'S ISSUE *continued*

If you agree that changes in SeniorCare will hurt older women, call your State Senator and your State Representative on the toll-free legislative hotline (1-800-362-9472) and tell them to protect SeniorCare against changes in benefits, deductibles or eligibility.

Mother's Day is the right time to protect SeniorCare—and make sure that older women are able to afford the drugs they need to stay healthy and independent.