



STATE OF MAINE  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
1 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE  
04333-0001

JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI  
GOVERNOR

## Media Advisory

For Immediate Release  
January 13, 2004

Contact: Lee Umphrey, 287-2531  
Trish Riley, 624-7442

### **MAINE Rx PLUS LAUNCHES THIS WEEKEND**

AUGUSTA -- Governor John E. Baldacci, joined by state legislators, the Attorney General and advocates, announced today a comprehensive plan to lower prescription drug prices for many Maine citizens. Said the Governor, "In partnership with over 100 Maine pharmacies, we are launching Maine Rx Plus to provide significant discounts to all Maine residents with incomes at or below 350% of the Federal poverty level. Maine will remain a leader in bringing lower cost drugs to our citizens."

The original Maine Rx program was halted by the Federal government. A Supreme Court decision granted Maine permission to continue the program. "Many people have worked long and hard to make Maine Rx Plus a reality," stated the Governor, "We have reconfigured the program to meet Federal concerns, to integrate it with Drugs for the Elderly and to make it ready to coordinate with the new Medicare drug benefit when that program starts."

The Governor recognized the legislature for working together on this important issue. Senate Majority Leader Sharon Anglin Treat, Senate sponsor of Maine Rx Plus, said, "The implementation of Maine Rx Plus comes just in time for many Maine people on tight budgets who have put off ordering their high cost prescription drugs in anticipation of the plan taking effect. Despite legal challenges over the past three years by the pharmaceutical industry and recent confusion about how the new Medicare Drug Program will work, the wait is over for over 275,000 Maine people who will now be eligible for benefits under the Maine Rx Plus prescription drug program. Maine Rx Plus will also be very effective because it serves as a wrap around program working in tandem with other health and drug benefit programs."

House Speaker Patrick Colwell added, "Maine Rx Plus will negotiate lower cost prescriptions for Maine seniors and working families by using our buying power as a



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

PHONE: (207) 287-3531 (Voice)

(207) 287-6548 (TTY)

FAX: (207) 287-1034

[www.maine.gov](http://www.maine.gov)

state. The Medicare bill Congress recently passed takes the opposite approach by forbidding the federal government from negotiating prices. The Maine Rx program takes the right path. It will provide much needed relief for countless seniors and working families, and it does so in a fiscally responsible way."

Senate President Beverly Daggett commented, "The rising costs of prescription drugs have ballooned into a national epidemic. I am proud to say that Maine has become a leader in developing unique and innovative legislation that aims at making the costs of prescription drugs affordable and accessible for all Mainers."

"Until the Federal Government allows the bulk reimportation of prescription drugs," said Representative David Lemoine, a member of the National Legislative Association on Prescription Drugs, "Maine's Rx Plus model is by geography and price the nearest thing to Canada."

Senator Art Mayo stated, "After this time lapse, I am glad we are rolling out this program and making it available for citizens in need."

In the phased enrollment, Maine Rx Plus cards will be sent automatically to 73,000 Maine residents who had participated in the now defunct Healthy Maine program which was halted by the Federal government in December 2002. Others whose income is \$31,440 or less a year for an individual can attain a card by calling 866-Rx Maine (866-796 2463). Cardholders will be eligible for 10-25% discounts off brand names and 60% off generic for a wide range of drugs that are also listed as preferred drugs in the MaineCare program. Discounts will be available effective this Saturday, January 17, 2004.

Baldacci praised the participating pharmacies noting that they are making discounts possible. "With this program, Maine pharmacies have agreed to work with us to help about 275,000 Maine citizens attain needed drugs at steep discounts. We deeply appreciate the commitment of Maine pharmacies to this important program." In addition to pharmacy discounts, Maine Rx Plus will use its volume to negotiate rebates and additional savings for consumers later in the year.

Said the Governor, "Maine Rx Plus is a program by Maine, for Maine that will start now to help all citizens whose incomes are below \$31,440 for an individual, \$42,420 for a couple and about \$64,400 for a family of four, regardless of age. Working together we will launch this Saturday the first in the nation Maine Rx Plus program as an investment in our people. Our efforts to bring affordable drugs to our citizens will not cease," concluded the Governor.

###