

January 16, 2004

**AARP - WHAT DOES IT STAND FOR?
ALWAYS ADVOCATING for the REPUBLICAN PARTY**

Dear Democratic Colleague:

AARP is busily making the rounds on Capitol Hill, before the media, and before their members in an attempt to rehabilitate themselves as advocates for America's seniors. It is a false claim. DO NOT HELP THEM.

Today, they had the audacity to announce their agenda to make improvements to the Republican Medicare prescription drug bill they played no small part in making law. As part of this presentation, AARP's Executive Director Bill Novelli announced that AARP hopes to make available a Medicare prescription drug discount card - likely their first step in profiting off this law they helped enact.

They met with my staff yesterday - for the last time I might add - and made clear that the bills they plan to support for improving the Medicare bill will need to be bipartisan. For example, AARP says one of their priority issues is to ensure that the Secretary has the option to negotiate drug discounts for seniors. Yet, when asked if they had reviewed or would endorse HR 3672, Rep. Chet Edwards' and Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi's bill to do just that, they squirmed uncomfortably in their seats and asked if it is a bipartisan bill.

Hello? Does ANYONE in Congress think that Republicans are interested in making improvements to the drug bill they just passed? HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson was quoted earlier this week saying, "The worst thing in the world is to start it and then have to change it mid-stream... We shouldn't revisit it until we get it up and running."

Bill Novelli is a long-time Republican operative. You've read the stories. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist knew that having him at the helm of AARP was their secret weapon. He's been courting Novelli ever since - taking him to dinner, bringing him in for advisory meetings, etc. Just like the Chamber of Commerce, AARP has become a Republican advocate.

As long as we buy into the charade that AARP speaks for America's seniors, we will be buying into the Republican agenda that AARP will help to enact. I urge you to treat AARP as they deserve to be treated - to ignore them! There are plenty of senior advocates who are not skills for President Bush and his plans to privatize Medicare and Social Security.

It's time to listen to that old adage from Nancy Reagan and "JUST SAY NO" to AARP.

Sincerely,

Pete Stark