

Press Release for Immediate Release

July 21, 2003

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AARP Salutes Senator Bob Smith for Protecting Vital Senior Programs

Senator Smith supported full-funding of P.A.A.D. and Senior Gold in the 2003-2004 budget

Trenton, NJ—AARP thanks Senator Bob Smith for voting to support full funding for PAAD and Senior Gold, critical state prescription drug assistance programs for modest-income seniors and people with disabilities.

With the challenging budget situation, seniors across the state rallied, and volunteers and staff at AARP New Jersey made an all-out effort to preserve full funding for these programs, beginning as early as January. AARP and the Governor's Office cosponsored a Senior Seminar on prescription drugs that brought over 1700 seniors to Trenton on January 13, and since then, AARP volunteers conducted frequent lobbying visits to the statehouse, made numerous calls, wrote letters to the editor of their local papers, and wrote many letters to their legislators. AARP also asked each legislator to sign a Prescription Drug Pledge stating that they would not support a budget unless it provided full-funding for these vital programs, and through the advocacy of seniors around the state, over half of the members of the State Legislature signed this pledge.

'We want to thank the legislators who have followed through on their promises to protect these vital programs and our most vulnerable residents who rely on them,' said Marilyn Askin, AARP New Jersey State President. 'AARP appreciates Senator Smith's support of measures that will prevent people who use PAAD and Senior Gold from experiencing cuts in benefits, losses of eligibility, or increases in their out-of-pocket expenses. Access to prescription drugs has proven to shorten expensive hospital stays and help people live longer, healthier, more independent lives.'

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AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to making life better for people 50 and over. We do not support or endorse candidates for political office. We provide information and resources; engage in legislative, regulatory and legal advocacy; assist members in serving their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These include *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *Segunda Juventud*, our quarterly newspaper in Spanish; *Live and Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for National Retired Teachers Association members; and our Web site, www.aarp.org. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.