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(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- To help seniors struggling to make ends meet, U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) is pushing for legislation that would ensure seniors' Social Security payments more accurately reflect the yearly increase in their everyday expenses. Congressman Altmire is an original co-sponsor of the Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act (H.R. 2429), legislation that would establish a separate consumer price index for seniors to ensure that their Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) are tied to their actual purchasing needs.

"Many seniors across western Pennsylvania need every single penny in their monthly Social Security checks to make ends meet," Altmire said. "The way Social Security payments are currently calculated is flawed, because it does not accurately take into account the rising expenses that seniors face year to year. This legislation will fix that and will help to ensure seniors receive the cost of living increases they need."

Currently, the Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates seniors' Social Security COLA by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), which is based on the number of goods and services consumed by younger workers. Because the CPI-W is based on younger workers' spending habits, it does not accurately account for seniors' expenses, particularly their health care costs.

As a result, seniors' COLA increase from 2003 to 2007 was barely one fourth the increase in Medicare Part B premiums. Additionally, the Congressional Budget Office predicted in March that, barring additional Congressional action, seniors may not receive a COLA for the next three years because younger workers' spending -- and the CPI-W that measures it -- is set to decline due to the economic recession.

The Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act would establish a separate consumer price index for the elderly (CPI-E) to ensure that seniors' Social Security COLA is more in line with their unique purchasing needs. This consumer price index would take into account the rise in the cost of products that seniors use, such as health care services and medicine, and more accurately reflect the increased costs they face each year.

This legislation is part of Congressman Altmire's ongoing efforts to help seniors through the current economic recession. Earlier this year, Altmire voted for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which provided seniors with a one-time economic recovery payment of \$250 to help them cover the cost of their daily expenses. Seniors began receiving their economic recovery payments in May.

