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May 2, 2008

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Representative **Rush Holt** The 12th District of New Jersey

Representative Rush Holt - The 12th District of New Jersey

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Dear Jared,

This week, Congress finally outlawed discrimination based on genetic makeup. For nearly ten years, I have cosponsored the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, legislation that would protect prospective and current employees from discrimination based on a genetic predisposition. It would provide strong protections to those individuals who may suffer from actual genetic discrimination now and in the future. Yesterday, the House passed the bill, 414-1 (The Senate passed the bill last week, 95-0) and the President has said he will sign it into law.

The Human Genome Project, begun in 1990, was created to provide a genetic map of the human body to aid the scientific and medical communities in their fight against some of the most insidious diseases and afflictions suffered by humanity. It is a great irony and a tragedy that this research is now being used as justification to fire, refuse to hire, or deny insurance to employees who have no control over their genetic destinies.

Individuals have testified before Congressional Committees about employers who had – without their knowledge or consent – subjected them to a genetics test, only to have the genetic information used against them. Without legal protections, an employer could learn that a job candidate is genetically predisposed to have breast cancer and decide not to hire her.

While 32 states, including New Jersey, already prohibit genetic discrimination in decisions on hiring, firing, or benefits, there is no strong and clear national law prohibiting this discrimination. Further, only 10 states prohibit employers from obtaining genetic information or genetic tests of employees through any means.

Increasing Our Social Capital

Many things besides money determine the quality of life of people in a community. In the last century, sociologists, economists, and political scientists began to explore the concept of “social capital” and its effect on members of a community. In one of its earliest definitions, Lyda Judson Hanifan – the state supervisor of West Virginia’s rural schools – used the term in 1916 to refer to “good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit.” More than 75 years later, social scientist Robert Putnam wrote in his study “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital” that social capital refers to “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit... life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital.”

Communities across the country and throughout the world have emphasized the importance of interaction and social networks to build and strengthen communities. In our country, the community PTA is an example of increasing social capital on child development, while the neighborhood watch strives to reduce crime.

Recently, as noted in a local newspaper, the Princeton Area Community Foundation and the Princeton Regional Chamber of Commerce Foundation launched an initiative to encourage community leaders to increase social capital in Central New Jersey. A Social Capital Benchmark Survey of residents of 19 communities in Mercer, Middlesex, and Somerset Counties found that residents in the area are as engaged as residents in the U.S., but have an opportunity to be even more engaged. The organizers hope that by engaging in this civic challenge – volunteering, meeting new neighbors at a community event, sitting on a local board – we will be taking advantage of our social capital, something that like economic capital pays significant dividends. Maybe other towns in our area will want to take stock of their social capital, as well.

'Extra Help' for Some Seniors Paying for Prescription Drugs

For Americans with limited income and resources, paying the high costs of prescription drugs can be especially challenging. Seniors with incomes under \$15,600 and whose assets (not including a house or car) are less than \$11,990 can apply for extra help from the Social Security Administration.

As much as \$3,600 per year is available to those who meet the above income and resources requirements. The extra funding will pay for most or all of the monthly premiums and annual deductibles and lower the prescription co-payments related to their plan.

If you are a relative, caregiver, or community advocate of someone who could benefit, you can find an online application at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp/> or by calling 1-800-772-1213 and asking for the *Application for Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs*. As always, please contact my office if you are having trouble with your prescription drug plan and need assistance cutting through red tape.

Sincerely,

RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress

P.S. Just a reminder: I always want to hear from you, but please don't reply to this e-mail. Instead, please email me through my website at www.holt.house.gov, or call me at 1-87-RUSH-HOLT (1-877-874-4658) to let me know what's on your mind. Please also note that you may unsubscribe from this list by clicking on the "unsubscribe" link at the bottom of this email.

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