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U.S. SENATE
WASHINGTON, DC

November 17, 2003

The Hon. William Thomas
2208 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0521

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of Verizon and its valued employees and retirees, I strongly urge you to vote for the Conference Report on the **Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003**. Enactment of this legislation will go a long way toward assuring that our Nation's retirees and their families will experience greater confidence and stability with respect to their financial and medical needs.

Verizon believes in protecting our employees' and retirees' health and financial needs, and as such has *voluntarily* provided comprehensive health and retirement benefits. With respect to health benefits, this voluntary act has been increasingly strained, due to double-digit increases in health care costs and ever-increasing encroachment by competitors who do not provide similar benefits. Verizon's ability to continue to offer these benefits despite these encroachments would be greatly enhanced if Medicare reform and prescription drug coverage were passed this year.

Our understanding of the final bill is that it includes provisions to provide as many employer options as possible. That is the right approach. It would encourage continued retiree health coverage in an efficient and cost-effective manner by permitting companies to choose among the options that are best suited to their varied retiree health plans and the needs of their retirees and their dependents.

It is vitally important to pass the bill this year to start to get the needed improvements in the system in place. I urge you to seize this historic opportunity to adopt reform of the Medicare Program and provide prescription drug coverage for America's retirees and their families.

Sincerely,

Ivan Seidenberg
President & CEO