

# From the Hill to the Heartland, Moving Medicare to the top of the Nation's Agenda

*"The time has come - in fact is long overdue - to strengthen and modernize the Medicare program. We need better coordination of care, health-promotion, and disease-prevention efforts."*

**Ardell DiCarlo, AIM Advocate  
Town Hall Meeting on Medicare**



---

## The Challenge:

In the fall of 2001, The Alliance to Improve Medicare (AIM)--a national coalition of 38 organizations representing senior citizens, doctors, hospitals, small and large businesses and others dedicated to strengthening and improving Medicare--asked Devillier Communications, Inc. (DCI) to undertake a national grassroots campaign that would underscore the importance of strengthening and improving Medicare. The challenge was to refocus public attention on this critical issue immediately following the national trauma of 9/11.

## Strategy:

DCI recommended a two-pronged, event-based media relations effort that would generate public discussion on this critical domestic issue with national policy-makers as well as local decision-makers. Former U.S. Representative Tim Penny (D-Minn.) agreed to serve as AIM spokesperson and to take a leading role in the proposed campaign. The effort would begin with a bi-partisan, highly informative Town Hall Meeting on Capitol Hill, followed by a series of speaking engagements and press coverage for Congressman Penny in targeted cities.

## Tactics:

Specifically, DCI:

- Worked with Former Congressman Tim Penny in his role as moderator of the Medicare Town Hall Meeting on Capitol Hill. The Meeting featured presentations by U.S. Senators Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), John Breaux (D-La.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Representative Michael Bilirakis (R-Fla.), all well-known leaders in the Medicare debate.
- Invited luncheon guests from a number of retirement centers across the Washington, D.C. area, who were encouraged to ask questions of the speakers and express their concerns about Medicare.

- Provided a "refresher" media training session for Congressman Penny and developed a series of informational press materials.
- Invited a number of health care and congressional reporters to attend the Town Hall Meeting and arranged for follow-up interviews with Congressman Penny.
- Provided media relations support in the other targeted cities.

## Results:

The Town Hall Meeting was well attended by more than 100 luncheon guests who participated in a lively exchange of views.

Reporters from the Associated Press, *Health News Daily*, *The Hill*, Reuters, *Congressional Daily* and *The Nation's Health* attended the event. That same day, Congressman Penny was interviewed on the ABC radio network, the Radio America Network, and the Talk Radio News show "American Breakfast."

The Town Hall Meeting set the stage for several more media interviews by Congressman Penny in Miami, Little Rock, Baton Rouge, Helena, Indianapolis and Omaha. Coverage included articles by the Associated Press and the *Omaha World-Herald*, numerous radio stories on high profile stations such as Philadelphia's NPR member station and NBC television coverage in Indianapolis and Helena.

---

*"We were thrilled with the results of our Town Hall Meeting and media relations effort. If you want something done in Washington, D.C., call Devillier Communications. They know how to get the job done right."*

**- Tracey Moorhead  
Executive Director, The Alliance to Improve Medicare**