

Hot Topics Newsletter

GENERAL NOTICES

- Senior Judge Tech Day is October 18, 2024. Registration opens in September.
- All overnight lodging requests should be arranged through the AOC Travel Coordinator, Allison Leebrick, at allison.leebrick@mdcourts.gov, unless otherwise approved by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland, the State Court Administrator (SCA), or their designee.
- For State Retirement updates, visit: <https://sra.maryland.gov/members> and for the newsletter: https://sra.maryland.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/retireenewsfeb2023_-_final_for_web.pdf?1677782761.
- For the latest news, updates, payroll info, Hot Topics and more, check out the Senior Judge webpage, <https://mdcourts.gov/hr/seniorjudges>. Don't forget to save the link so you can refer to it at any time.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE FOR RETIREES

BY: HON. DEBORAH S. EYLER



On January 1, 2025, the existing Prescription Drug Plan for State of Maryland retirees will be eliminated and all Medicare-eligible State retirees, their spouses, and dependents will need to enroll in individual Medicare Part D prescription drug plans. This also applies to the surviving Medicare-eligible spouses of deceased State retirees. The change is the result of a State law that was challenged in court, unsuccessfully. Because Judges are State retirees, they, their spouses, their eligible dependents, and the surviving spouses of deceased Judges are affected by this law.

Since 2018, the prescription drug plan for State retirees (and others named above) has been what is known as a “Medicare wraparound plan” through SilverScript. It is a special Medicare Part D plan the State provided that mimicked the prescription drug plan for State employees. (That is why your “Explanation of Benefits” statements say “Medicare Part D.”) The Medicare wraparound plan, which will be eliminated on January 1, 2025, is not the same as an individual Medicare Part D plan. During open enrollment, which runs from October 15 to December 7, 2024, State retirees (and others named above) will need to enroll in individual Medicare Part D plans. For Judges, this means that the retired Judge, his/her spouse, any eligible dependent, and surviving spouses of deceased retired Judges must each enroll in an individual Medicare Part D plan. Not doing so will result in the loss of all prescription drug coverage as of January 1, 2025.

IN THIS ISSUE :

- RETIREE MEDICARE PART D TRANSITION TIMELINE
Page 2
- RETIRED JUDGE ROBERT FISCHER PASSES
Page 3

- JIS CORNER
Page 4
- DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CONTINUING EDUCATION
- REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM FOR HOME SECURITY SYSTEMS
Page 5

- IN MEMORIAM
- UPCOMING ADVANCED PAYROLLS
Page 5
- SENIOR JUDGES COMMITTEE
- RETIREMENT SERVICES CONTACT LIST
Page 6

Although Medicare Part D is a federal government program, it consists of prescription drug plans offered by private insurance companies. Each company has its own “formulary,” *i.e.*, the drugs covered by its plan, and its own pricing. The companies manage access to their covered drugs differently, with some having levels of drugs (tiers); required prior authorizations for some drugs; quantity limits; and so forth. In September of a given year the private insurance companies release their formularies and pricing for the next year, so retirees can learn about them before open enrollment begins.

The easiest way to enroll in an individual Medicare Part D plan is on-line, at [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov). Medicare.gov has a user friendly “Medicare Prescription Drug Finder.” If you enter your zip code, pharmacy, and the drugs you are taking, the website will display information about the private insurance companies that offer plans in your area that include your medications and the monthly premium for each plan. A deeper search will show the range of drugs in the formulary for each private plan and other information, such as out-of-pocket costs and deductibles. Although you cannot enroll in Medicare Part D until open enrollment starts on October 15, and the up-to-date information about available plans will not be accessible until September, you can use the Medicare Prescription Drug Finder now just to get a preview of how it works and what information it provides.

Keep in mind that the monthly cost of an individual Medicare Part D plan will be the monthly premium for the private insurance company plan you enroll in plus what is termed your “Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount” (IRMAA). (You probably have experienced this for the cost of Medicare Parts A and B.) The IRMAA is an amount calculated based on your tax filing status and income.

Beginning in 2025, the Inflation Reduction Act, a federal law, will limit out-of-pocket expenses for Medicare Part D enrollees to \$2,000 per year. In addition, the State of Maryland has established programs to assist with out-of-pocket costs for certain medications for certain retirees (depending upon dates of hiring and retirement). Such out-of-pocket expenses only are incurred for drugs that are within the formulary of the plan you enroll in, so it is important that your medications are within the formulary of that plan. All the plans have mechanisms for seeking non-formulary coverage in the event of a new diagnosis requiring medication not needed before.

According to the State Department of Management and Budget (DBM), in July the State will procure a contractor to offer informational sessions and one-on-one counseling to all those affected by this change. The counseling can be done in person, on the phone, and on the web. The counselors will be licensed and can assist you with selecting the individual Medicare Part D plan that is best suited to your needs. DBM should be contacting you directly about the sessions and counseling. You can check DBM’s website for updates at <https://dbm.maryland.gov/benefits/Pages/Retirees.aspx>. Please make sure your address is current with DBM.

In the meantime, leading up to October 15 open enrollment, the Senior Judges Committee is working with the Judicial College and Human Resources to assist Judicial Medicare-eligible retirees and beneficiaries in navigating Medicare Part D. Together we are developing a recorded webinar and a quick reference guide (“QRG”) and are organizing an in-person training. The training will be held at the Maryland Judicial Center in Annapolis, in September, on a date to be determined. Depending upon demand, we also may hold the training regionally. If you are interested in attending an in-person training for Medicare Part D, please email Peter Saquella, Manager of Judicial Education, at Peter.Saquella@mdcourts.gov.

The Senior Judges Committee will continue its efforts to keep everyone apprised of all developments respecting prescription drug coverage.

RETIREE MEDICARE PART D TRANSITION TIMELINE

The current State-provided prescription drug plan for Medicare-eligible retirees will end on

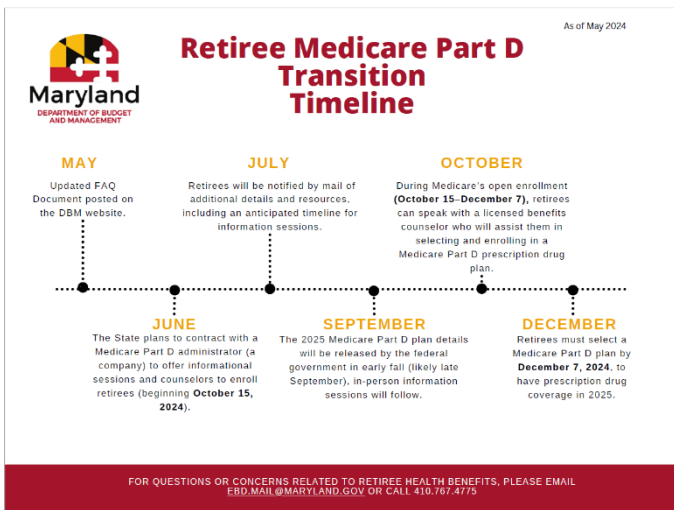
December 31, 2024. Retirees will need to enroll in a Medicare Part D plan during Medicare open enrollment this fall (October 15 – December 7), to have prescription drug coverage on January 1, 2025.

You will need to select a Medicare Part D plan from the options that will be available in your geographic area. To assist you with this transition, the State will provide one-on-one counseling to walk through your options and enroll you in a plan this fall.

The Administrative Office of the Courts, in collaboration with the Senior Judges' Committee, intends to provide additional support to Medicare-eligible retirees and beneficiaries from the Judges' Pension System to navigate the uncharted territory of Medicare Part D. We are planning to provide quick reference guides and in-person and virtual information sessions, as well as technological assistance.

Department of Budget and Management (DBM) can be contacted via email at ebd.mail@maryland.gov or by calling 410-767-4775 (toll free: 800-307-8283) for any questions regarding the prescription drug coverage change. You may also contact Judiciary Human Resources Division at 410-260-1731 or hr@mdcourts.gov to assist with contacting DBM or to answer general questions regarding the changes.

Below is the transition timeline provided by DBM. We look forward to providing assistance.



Circuit Court for Howard County, died on April 16, 2024, in Naples, Florida.

Judge Fischer grew up in humble circumstances in the Westport community of Baltimore City on land where his grandfather, an immigrant from Lithuania, once



operated a beer garden. Judge Fischer's mother died when he was 10 years old, and his father died when he was 19. Nonetheless, it was his career as a high school and college wrestler that created great opportunities for him in life.

His wrestling career began at Southern High School in Baltimore City in 1946 when he won his first of two Maryland Scholastic Association Championships. Judge Fischer received a wrestling scholarship to the University of Maryland at College Park. Over the next four years, he won two Southern Conference Championships in the 157-pound class and finished with an overall career dual meet record of 28-1-1. In 1954, he held Maryland's longest dual meet consecutive win record at 15. Judge Fischer was undefeated in dual meets in his senior year and was awarded the Charles Leroy Mackert Award as the wrestler who had contributed the most to wrestling at the University of Maryland. He was a three-time NCAA qualifier in 1952-54 and reached the NCAA semi-finals in 1954. Judge Fischer was elected to the Maryland Athletic Hall of Fame and the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.

Between 1955 and 1958, Judge Fischer served in the United States Air Force as a jet fighter pilot instructor (call sign "Fischcake"). He was an instructor pilot at a time when the development of high-performance combat jets was still in its early stages and teaching students to fly them was dangerous work. He recounted to friends and family several close calls with student pilots. Upon completion of active duty, Judge Fischer continued his service in the Maryland National Guard until 1974. After leaving active duty, he attended the University of Baltimore School of Law, from which he graduated and was admitted to the Maryland Bar

RETIRED JUDGE ROBERT FISCHER PASSES

BY: HON. GLENN T. HARRELL, JR.

Robert F. Fischer, a retired Judge of the Appellate Court of Maryland (then called the Court of Special Appeals) and long-time Judge on the

in 1961. Out of law school, he worked as an associate and partner at Pierson & Pierson in Baltimore for 10 years. He then opened a law practice in Ellicott City in Howard County, and also served as an Assistant County Solicitor and County Solicitor.

In 1974, Judge Fischer was appointed to the District Court of Maryland, sitting in Howard County. He served in this capacity until 1977, when he was appointed to the Circuit Court. In 1988, he was appointed to the Court of Special Appeals. In a September 30, 1988, article in the Baltimore Sun reporting on his elevation to the appellate court, Judge Fischer recounted that he had incurred sometimes the ire of prosecutors for giving criminal defendants a second chance. He explained at that time: "If I thought a person was sincere about changing his pattern of life, I was inclined to give them an opportunity, if it was feasible." Said the Judge, "I stuck my neck out a lot. I've taken chances on people who were not entirely safe risks, and fortunately, most of them turned out well." Judge Fischer served on the appellate court until his retirement in 1997. For a few years following his retirement, he continued to sit part-time as a senior judge in various courts throughout the State until he moved to Naples, Florida, where he pursued his interests of painting (art, not rooms), making furniture, and golf.

Judge Fischer is survived by his wife, Sally, his two children, Kurt Fischer, Esq., and Keri Corless, and five grandchildren. He will be remembered by his appellate colleagues as a warm, gracious and helpful person. Common sense was his polar star on the benches on which he served.

A memorial service was held in Naples, Florida.

JIS CORNER: STAY IN THE KNOW



Cyber Security Awareness And Security Training

Judicial Information Systems receives cyber threat intelligence from one of our partner

organizations that the United States, including state, local, tribal, and territorial government organizations are at a heightened risk of disruptive cyber-attacks.

Here are some things we can do to prepare ourselves:

- **Trust your instincts:** If something feels off, it probably is. Always take a moment to consider the legitimacy of any unexpected request, especially if it asks for sensitive information or actions.
- **Be cautious and vigilant:** If you receive a request to share passwords, financial details, or other sensitive information, especially if the request is out of the ordinary, report it to Information Security immediately.
- **Check email addresses:** If you receive a suspicious email, check the senders' address. It might resemble a legitimate address but may have slight variations.
- **Examine URLs carefully:** Hover over hyperlinks without clicking on them to see the actual URL. Compare it to the legitimate website's URL. Look out for misspellings, extra characters, or other irregularities.
- **Check for unsolicited contacts:** Be wary of unsolicited phone calls, emails, or messages. Legitimate companies usually do not make unsolicited requests for personal or financial information.
- **Analyze the urgency of a message:** Social engineering often creates a sense of urgency to push their victims into making hasty decisions. Statements like "Your account will be disabled unless you respond immediately" should raise suspicions.
- **Check for generic salutations:** Phishing emails, a common form of social engineering, might start with generic greetings like "Dear Customer" rather than using your actual name.
- **Look for poor grammar and spelling:** Many phishing emails have spelling and grammar errors. Pay attention to awkward phrases and mistakes, especially in emails that claim to be from reputable organizations.

For additional computer safety tips, visit the [Information Security](#) page on CourtNet.

The Judiciary Information Systems Department provides Information Security Training on a quarterly basis. The trainings are mandatory for everyone. The training is critical to help employees understand the importance of cybersecurity. It provides us with important information on how to identify potential threats, report them, and prevent security incidents from happening.

Senior Judge Information Security Training in 2024:

- July
- October

If you have questions or need assistance with training, contact JIS Customer Services at 410-260-1114.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CONTINUING EDUCATION

BY: PETER T. SAQUELLA, ESQ.

As we move into the year's second half, we wanted to send a friendly reminder to complete your annual required continuing education hours. A judge may meet these hours by attending any judicial education class or judicial education webinar. The annual requirement changed this year to 15 hours, of which three must be approved diversity & inclusion ("D&I") hours. The 2024 Judicial Education Course Catalog notes the classes and webinars that qualify for D&I credit in the table of contents and next to each corresponding course title in the monthly listing of courses.

For those judges who attended two workshops or the Harriet Tubman Museum tour on the second day of the Judicial Conference, April 18, 2024, Chief Justice Fader approved two hours of D&I CLE credit. If you attended two workshops or the Harriet Tubman Museum tour but did not register to do so, please email the Registrar so you will receive credit Educationregistrar@mdcourts.gov. If you did register, credit is provided based on that registration data.

If you have any questions about your annual education requirement or class enrollment, please

contact Pete Saquella at Peter.Saquella@mdcourts.gov, 410-260-3657.

REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM FOR HOME SECURITY SYSTEMS



The Judiciary Human Resources Division (JHRD) is excited to continue the implementation of the [Policy on a Reimbursement Program for Home Security Systems for Justices, Judges, Magistrates and Commissioners](#). This program is designed to provide protection, safety, and security by reimbursing installation costs of a basic home security system for your primary residence of up to \$1,500 and monitoring and maintenance costs of up to \$600 per year. On April 17, State Court Administrator Judy Rupp announced this vital program.

To participate in the program, you must complete the enrollment form and send it to hr@mdcourts.gov for review and approval. Reimbursement requests for the current year must be submitted by December 31, 2024 for payment by the end of the calendar year.

For additional information and the enrollment form, please contact Debra Kaminski at (410) 260-1271 or debra.kaminski@mdcourts.gov.

IN MEMORIAM

❖ Hon. Robert F. Fischer
Appellate Court of Maryland

❖ Hon. Glenn L. Klavans
Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County

❖ Hon. James L. Sherbin
Circuit Court for Garrett County

❖ Hon. R. Russel Sadler
District Court in Howard County

UPCOMING ADVANCED PAYROLLS FOR SENIOR JUDGES

08/14/24 – 08/27/24 Timesheets will be due for approval by noon on Monday, August 26th.

09/25/24 – 10/08/24 Timesheets will be due for approval by noon on Monday, October 7th.
10/23/24 – 11/05/24 Timesheets will be due for approval by noon on Monday, November 4th.
***12/04/24 – 12/17/24** Timesheets will be due for approval by noon on Monday, December 16th. **Pay date 12/25/24 is advanced one day due to the holiday and will now be 12/24/24.**
01/01/25 – 01/14/25 Timesheets will be due for approval by noon on Monday, January 13th.
01/29/25 – 02/11/25 Timesheets will be due for approval by noon on Monday, February 10th.
05/07/25 – 05/20/25 Timesheets will be due for approval by noon on Monday, May 19th.
06/04/25 – 06/17/25 Timesheets will be due for approval by noon on Monday, June 16th.

**THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL'S
SENIOR JUDGES COMMITTEE**

Hon. James A. Kenney III, Chair, Senior Judge
 Hon. Deborah Sweet Eyler, Vice Chair, Senior Judge
 Hon. Jean Baron, Senior Judge
 Hon. Lynne A. Battaglia, Senior Judge
 Hon. Lawrence R. Daniels, Senior Judge
 Hon. Glenn T. Harrell, Senior Judge
 Hon. Steven I. Platt, Senior Judge
 Amanda Purnell, Court Administrator, Circuit Court for Talbot County
 Hon. Irma S. Raker, Senior Judge
 Sharon Reed, District Court Headquarters
 Hon. Marcus Z. Shar, Senior Judge
 Hon. Nancy B. Shuger, Senior Judge
 Hon. Norman R. Stone III, Senior Judge
 Hon. Dennis M. Sweeney, Senior Judge
 Eliana Pangelinan, Staff

RETIREMENT SERVICES CONTACT LIST

Maryland State Retirement and Pension System – 1-800-492-5909

Shane Brown
sbrown@sra.state.md.us
 410-625-5664

Social Security Administration (SSA)
www.socialsecurity.gov
 1-800-772-1213

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid
www.medicare.gov
 1-800-633-4227

Maryland Supplement Retirement Plan (MSRP) – 1-800-545-4730

Angela Anderson
angela.anderson@maryland.gov
 443-305-9055

**Department of Budget & Management,
Employee Benefits Division**
 410-767-4775

Missy Plunkert
mary.plunkert@maryland.gov
 410-319-2176

**Maryland Judiciary:
Human Resources Division**

Ebonye Caldwell, Assistant State Court Administrator
ebonye.caldwell@mdcourts.gov
 410-260-1289

Lauren Weirauch, Dep. Director, HR
lauren.weirauch@mdcourts.gov
 410-260-3765

Debra Kaminski
debra.kaminski@mdcourts.gov
 410-260-1271

Employment Services – 410-260-1731

Janean Thompson, Supervisor
janean.thompson@mdcourts.gov
 410-260-1269

Natasha Curtis
natasha.copper@mdcourts.gov
 410-260-3678

Leah Musiker
leah.musiker@mdcourts.gov
 410-260-1276

Barbara Prevo
barbara.prevo@mdcourts.gov
 410-260-1288

Office of Payroll Services – 410-260-1735

Alex Hoyle, Manager
alex.hoyle@mdcourts.gov
 410-260-1286

Gail Graham
gail.graham@mdcourts.gov
 410-260-1721

Any questions regarding this issue, please contact Eliana Pangelinan at eliana.pangelinan@mdcourts.gov