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Easley Touts New N.C. Drug Plan For Seniors

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RALEIGH, N.C. -- North Carolina plans to launch a first-of-its-kind prescription drug program for low-income seniors in January.

Gov. Mike Easley said North Carolina Rx is unique because state taxpayers won't have to pay a cent to operate the program.

Easley has taken \$24 million from the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, which is funded by the state's portion of the national tobacco litigation settlement, to make the drug program work.

"We're trying to fix the holes in the Medicare D program, and that's what North Carolina Rx does. It will make it virtually free for most senior citizens," he said.

About 50,000 low-income seniors statewide would be eligible for the program, and Easley said his office will push get everyone enrolled. The Governor's Office has created a public-service announcement to get the message out to seniors.

"When people stop taking their medication, it means more pain and more suffering, and they end up in the hospital and it costs us as a state and a nation," he said. "So, it's not only the right thing to do, it's economically the smart thing to do."

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Reporter: [David Crabtree](#)

Photographer: [Nathan Monroe](#)

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