

## House Members Introduce H.R. 4, a Bi-partisan Bill to Negotiate Lower Drug Prices

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### NEWS RELEASE

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Contacts: Jodi Seth/Dingell

202-225-2927

Matthew Beck/Rangel

202-225-3625

Jeffrey Connor/Emerson

202-225-4404

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Representatives Dingell, Emerson, Rangel, Shea-Porter, and more than 190 of their colleagues in the House today introduced a bill that would require the government to negotiate for lower drug prices for American seniors and people with disabilities in the Medicare program.

H.R. 4, the Medicare Prescription Drug Negotiation Act of 2007, will help seniors get better prices on prescription medications under Medicare. The current law, written largely at the behest of the pharmaceutical industry, explicitly prohibits Medicare from negotiating for lower prices.

"Seniors, individuals with disabilities and the taxpayers of America were done a disservice when the Medicare Prescription Drug bill passed with a provision that prohibited the Secretary of Health and Human Services from negotiating with drug manufacturers for lower prescription drug prices," said Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

"The ability to negotiate the cost of prescription drugs purchased through the Medicare program has the potential to constitute a tremendous savings to taxpayers. Before we ever trim benefits to senior citizens, we must consider the efficiency of the programs that serve them. In many cases, pharmaceutical drugs are gram-for-gram more expensive to the American public than gold. We have a duty to the taxpayer to get the best bang for the buck, especially on costly pharmaceuticals for which the federal government facilitates purchases in such large quantities. I am proud that this legislation is coming to the House floor for consideration and urge its bipartisan passage," said Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO).

"Negotiating for lower prescription drug prices is a long overdue step toward making health care more affordable for Medicare beneficiaries," said Ways and Means Chairman Charles B. Rangel (D-NY). "Congress should do all it can to put the needs of the American people before those of special interests."

Drug prices under the Medicare prescription drug plan are more than 80 percent higher than prices negotiated by other agencies in the federal government and more than 60 percent higher than prices in Canada. In 2007, many beneficiaries in private drug plans will see their premiums increase by an average of ten percent, and some premiums will rise more than six-fold if they stay in the same plan.

"As someone who has worked many years with senior citizens, I have seen people forced to choose between buying medications and paying for rent or food," said Rep. Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH). "This is unacceptable in America."

The Medicare Prescription Drug Legislation was passed in the dead of night with little time for members of Congress to review the hundreds of pages of text involved in such a complex proposal.

Americans overwhelmingly support having the Secretary of HHS negotiate for lower prescription drug prices on behalf of Medicare. The bill also has the support of a number of organizations including the AARP, The National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, The Consumer's Union, the AFL-CIO and Families USA.

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515