

## Congressman John B. Larson Statement on House Majority Leader's Dismissal of Drug Reimportation

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HARTFORD, CT- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) said today that he was deeply troubled by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay's refusal to consider any substantive changes to the Medicare prescription drug plan that has so far failed to materialize any real savings for our elderly.

Larson spoke to comments DeLay made in a press conference Wednesday in which he flatly rejected attempts to allow prescription drugs to be imported from Canada at a substantially cheaper price than they are available to seniors in the United States. DeLay also indicated little interest in having the government use its significant bargaining power to negotiate lower prices with the pharmaceutical companies on behalf of seniors, as it does with the Veterans Administration. .

"It's dishonest to say we're doing everything we can for our seniors when there is so much more we can do," Larson said. "It's wrong to put the drug lobby's interests ahead of older Americans."

Larson is a cosponsor of H.R. 328, which would require the Secretary of HHS to create rules allowing reimportation and is seeking that it go to the floor for an up or down vote. The bill demands strict safety standards, requiring importing nations to have requirements on par with the United States.

America has over 40 million elderly and disabled Americans who rely on prescription medication to maintain their way of life. Over the past few years, prescription drug costs have skyrocketed.

Larson said expensive drug cost put seniors at risk of not taking their medicine or reducing their dosages.

Larson has repeatedly said that he believes a genuine prescription-drug benefit plan for seniors is long overdue. The prescription-drug bill signed into law by the President, he said, does little to help seniors. It does not address the astronomical cost of prescription drugs that seniors rely on and leaves a huge coverage gap, he added.

A July 2004 report prepared by the minority staff of the House Committee on Government reform found that in Connecticut Medicare drug benefit cards available to seniors do not provide meaningful discounts for the drugs they most often use. Moreover, the prices are significantly higher than prices for the same drugs in Canada or that the federal government negotiates on behalf of the VA.

Larson voted against the prescription drug plan that the majority passed in late 2003, saying that it funneled huge subsidies to the pharmaceutical industry while failing to relieve the elderly from the high cost of prescriptions.

In July 2004, Larson voted against a trade agreement that was before the house because it contained precedent-setting language that would allow pharmaceutical companies to prevent Americans from buying low-cost prescription drugs imported from other nations.

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