

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The rising cost of prescription drugs is forcing many Americans to forego needed prescriptions. There have been some steps taken to reduce costs through the greater use of generic drugs. But, pharmaceutical expenses continue to cripple the budgets of working families and seniors.

Since I was elected to serve the First District I have fought to lower your costs for prescription drugs. I cosponsored H.R. 4, which would allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate down the price of prescription drugs in the Medicare Part D Program. This common sense approach works in the Veterans Administration system and it will work to lower costs for our seniors. The bill passed the House in January of 2007 with a 255-170 vote.

Here are some other bills and reforms that I supported in the 110th Congress to lower the costs of prescription drugs:

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Improving Access to Part D: I cosponsored The Prescription Coverage Now Act of 2007, H.R.1536. This legislation would offer low-income seniors an expedited process to apply for and receive subsidies for their Medicare Part D plan.

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National Drug Plan: As Part D plans can vary by state, I believe we can reduce some of the confusion for seniors by offering a nationwide option to every beneficiary. I supported The Medicare Prescription Drug SOS Act of 2007, H.R.3025, which would require the Department of Health and Human Services to offer a nationwide prescription drug plan. This bill would also require negotiation with drug companies over the prices they charge for prescriptions offered in the plan.

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Access to Necessary Medication: I believe that seniors on Medicare should have access to the necessary drugs their doctors prescribe for them. So, I cosponsored the Medicare Part D Drug Class Protection Act of 2007, H.R. 3061. This legislation puts patients and doctors back in charge of the vital medications they need. It requires Medicare prescription drug plans to expand the number of drugs available in their formularies and provides patients with an appeals process if their claims are denied.

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E-Prescribing: The use of new technology can improve the quality of our health care and help reduce costs. As part of that effort, I have co-sponsored the Medicare Improvements and Patients Protection Act (MIPPA) of 2007, H.R. 6331. That legislation gives physicians an incentive to use e-prescribing technology that lets them communicate directly with pharmacies. It cuts out inefficiencies and alerts doctors to any other medication that a patient is taking that could be dangerous.

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Prescription Drug Importation: I believe that we need to allow the safe importation of prescription drugs from other countries. If there is a lower cost alternative to skyrocketing prescription drug costs available outside the U.S. I believe we should be able to buy them. But we also must put in place the necessary safeguards to uphold the high standards we set for medication in this country.

For more information on prescription drug reforms please see:

CRS Report: Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Benefit: A Primer

CRS Report: Pharmaceutical Costs: A Comparison of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Medicaid, and Medicare Policies