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SCHAKOWSKY BILLS TO IMPROVE MEDICARE DRUG BENEFIT INCLUDED IN HOUSE AMENDMENT

WASHINGTON, DC -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky today spoke in favor of an amendment offered by Representative Marion Berry (D-AR) that included two of her bills to strengthen the Medicare drug benefit. Schakowsky is an original sponsor of the Medicare Informed Choice Act, which would give beneficiaries an additional six months to choose a plan, and the Medicare Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act, which would create a uniform, affordable benefit under Medicare. Both of those bills were included in an amendment to the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act that passed the House today. The Republican leadership ruled the amendment out of order and it did not pass the House.

Below is Rep. Schakowsky's statement on the amendment:

Three months into the implementation of the Medicare drug benefit, one thing is clear. Part D is a disaster. Beneficiaries are being bombarded by marketers and have been victimized by fraud. Forty percent of beneficiaries have yet to choose a plan because they remain perplexed and frustrated.

For \$1.2 trillion dollars, seniors and people with disabilities deserve better than this.

The Berry amendment would provide beneficiaries with an additional six months to choose a plan. According to the CBO, an additional 1.1 million beneficiaries would enroll this year if late-enrollment penalties were eliminated.

The Berry amendment also offers a drug benefit fix. It would establish a real benefit that is administered by Medicare - one that is uniform and low-cost. It would cover all medically necessary drugs. It would allow Medicare to negotiate with the drug companies for lower prices, like the VA does.

Allowing negotiation could create enough savings to fully fund the drug benefit with no contribution from beneficiaries - and leave a surplus of \$40 billion over 7 years.

Instead of boosting the profits of drug and insurance companies, this amendment meets the needs of seniors and people with disabilities.