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**DEMOCRATS LAUNCH CAMPAIGN
TO BRING SENIORS AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS BY REQUIRING MEDICARE
TO NEGOTIATE
FOR LOWER PRICES**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined House Democrats in launching a campaign to force the House Republican leadership to schedule a vote on [H.R. 3767](#), the Medicare Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act of 2004.

Schakowsky, who is a leading sponsor of H.R. 3767, along with U.S. Representatives Marion Berry (D-AR) and Tom Allen (D-ME), said the bill would give Medicare the authority to use its bargaining power to negotiate for lower drug prices, passing on the savings to seniors and persons with disabilities.

"[The Republican Medicare drug law](#) signed by President Bush is a disaster for seniors and persons with disabilities. It does nothing to lower drug prices for seniors, but does plenty to protect drug company profits by prohibiting Medicare from negotiating for cheaper drugs," said Schakowsky, a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

"To undo the damage, the House must immediately vote to pass the Medicare Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act of 2004. H.R. 3767 will provide Medicare beneficiaries with lower drug prices, the guarantee of uniform prescription drug benefits, and the ability to enroll in a Medicare-operated plan," Schakowsky said.

Schakowsky, Berry, Allen and other leading advocates in Congress who are working to pass an affordable Medicare prescription drug plan joined House Democratic leader [Nancy Pelosi \(D-CA\)](#) and seniors, including [Catherine Easterling](#), a senior struggling to pay for her prescription drugs, during a news conference on Capitol Hill. They announced that Democrats will use a parliamentary tool known as a "discharge petition" to force a vote on H.R. 3767. A majority of the House, or 218

members, must sign the petition in order to secure a vote by the full House on a bill that is being bottled-up in committee.

"Seniors know what they want and how to get it: cheaper drugs through a Medicare program that uses its bargaining power to negotiate for the deepest discounts, just like the VA. Republicans are standing in the way. We are launching this discharge petition so that seniors and persons with disabilities get what they want and deserve," Schakowsky said.

"First, we must repeal the prohibition on Medicare negotiating for lower prices. Our bill would require Medicare to use its bargaining clout to drive down prices, producing real savings for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. In October 2001, Secretary Thompson negotiated with Bayer Corporation for Cipro tablets for federal employees. Instead of the \$4 to \$5 per pill retail price that Bayer was charging, he bargained them down to 95 cents a bill, dropping down to 75 cents if HHS ordered more than one shipment. That's more than a 75% savings. Just think how much money Medicare could save seniors and persons with disabilities if it used its bargaining power to bargain for discounts," Schakowsky added.

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She continued, "Second, we need to repeal the prohibition on Medicare offering a drug plan. No beneficiary should have to leave Medicare - enroll in a Medicare HMO or a private drug plan - to get a drug benefit. If you want to see what a mess this new law created, just look at the confusion and scams being created under the drug card. Think about how Medicare HMOs have pulled in and out of the market, abandoning millions of seniors. Medicare provides the guarantee that seniors want but that crucial guarantee is denied them under this new law."

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"H.R. 3767 will lower drug prices by allowing seniors and persons with disabilities to stay in Medicare and give Medicare the authority to bargain for lower prices. We need to pass this bill and provide a real - an affordable - drug benefit in Medicare," Schakowsky concluded.