

JUNE 1, 2004

**SCHAKOWSKY TO SENATOR BOB DOLE:  
"CHICAGO SENIORS AREN'T BUYING WHAT YOU'RE SELLING"**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued the following statement on the day that former Senator Bob Dole, on a drug company funded trip, visited a Chicago-suburb to urge seniors to sign up for a Medicare drug card. Today is the first day that Medicare beneficiaries can begin using these privately-run drug cards. Below is Schakowsky's statement:**

**"It is interesting that someone who has most recently been a TV spokesman for the drug industry is now on a Pfizer-sponsored tour trying to sell a new product - the Medicare drug card. Senior citizens are too smart to believe Senator Bob Dole or buy a shoddy product when better ones are available.**

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**Seniors want to know why they cannot buy safe, cheaper drugs from Canada without the threat of prosecution. They want to know why the Medicare law that Senator Dole is promoting actually prohibits Medicare from negotiating for bulk discounts, as the Veterans Administration. They want to know why they will be locked into a single Medicare drug card for a year while the card seller can change the drugs that are covered and their prices every week."**

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**Seniors are not buying the hype, and it's not surprising that few have bought the card that Senator Dole and the drug companies are advertising. Most seniors in Illinois, for example, will get better savings under Senior Care and the Illinois Buyer's Club, not the Medicare drug card.**

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**After listening to the Bush Administration's glitzy ads and PR campaign - part of which the General Accounting Office has said was an illegal use of taxpayer dollars - senior citizens are heeding the old axiom: buyer beware."**

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**There is no guarantee that the drugs they need will even be covered. Private drugs companies - not physicians -- decide what medicines are covered and when they are covered. There is no guarantee that drugs will be affordable. Drug prices have increased exorbitantly - far above the inflation rate - and will still be unaffordable to many**

seniors even with limited discounts.[] []

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**"Medicare beneficiaries deserve real savings and constant coverage.[] It's time to repeal and replace the Republican Medicare drug law and give seniors what they want:[] a comprehensive, voluntary, affordable benefit under Medicare."**

**Schakowsky and Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) are the authors of the Medicare Prescription Drug Savings Act.[] The legislation will provide Medicare beneficiaries with greater choice, lower drug prices, the guarantee of uniform prescription drug benefits, and an important new choice - the ability to enroll in a Medicare-operated plan. The Medicare-operated plan will be able to obtain lower drug prices because it can use its bargaining power to negotiate for discounts, like the VA.**