

JULY 24, 2003

**SCHAKOWSKY APPLAUDS PASSAGE  
OF BILL TO GIVE CONSUMERS ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE AND SAFE DRUGS FROM  
ABROAD,  
BUT FAVORS REDUCING PRICES HERE AT HOME**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today applauded the passage of H.R. 2427, the Pharmaceutical Access Act, legislation that would give consumers access to affordable and safe drugs from abroad. Schakowsky said, however, in a Congressional Record statement, *"We should be here tonight debating measures to ensure that health care consumers can go to their local pharmacy and get the drugs that they need at a price that they can afford. We should be passing legislation to make sure that American consumers here at home are not charged many times more than their neighbors in Canada for the same drugs."*

Below is Schakowsky's complete Congressional Record statement:

**DON'T BLOCK CONSUMERS' ONLY ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE DRUGS**

*Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in support of H.R. 2427, the Pharmaceutical Access Act.*

*Over 13 million senior citizens on Medicare and 42 million uninsured Americans have no access to prescription drug coverage. Millions of others have skimpy coverage that runs out quickly, leaving them to face months of bills that they must scramble to find the money to pay. The excessive price of prescription drugs creates financial crises for those who struggle to pay exorbitant bills and health crises for those who are forced to go without needed medications, to share drugs with family members, or to take half doses in an attempt to make their prescription last a little longer.*

*I wish that we were on the floor tonight debating legislation to force U.S. drug manufacturers to charge reasonable prices for their products, products that are developed and tested with significant amounts of U.S. taxpayer dollars. It is shameful that we - alone among the industrialized world - have left the pharmaceutical industry free to price gouge our constituents. We should be here tonight debating measures to ensure that health care consumers can go to their local pharmacy and get the drugs that they need at a price that they can afford. We should be passing legislation to make sure that American consumers here at home are not charged many times more than their neighbors in Canada for the same drugs.*

*Unfortunately, the drug companies have used their financial clout to prevent those debates. Last year, drug companies spent over \$91 million to lobby Congress. They hired 675 lobbyists - enough to provide each member of Congress with their own*

*personal lobbyist with more to spare. They have spent millions of dollars on front groups to get their message out. Tragically for the American consumer, those investments have paid off. Last month, this body even passed a Medicare prescription drug bill that prohibits Medicare from using its power to negotiate for discounts or from interfering in any way to lower unconscionably high drug prices. Ironically, a number of my colleagues who support H.R. 2427 because it will give American consumers access to affordable drug prices established through negotiations by other governments, voted to prevent Medicare from using the same techniques.*

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*Tonight, the drug industry is now working to shut down the only remaining avenue open to senior citizens and other health care consumers. Having stopped access to affordable drugs here in the United States, the drug companies are now trying to block access to affordable drugs from Canada and other countries.□□*

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*Reimportation can and must be done safely. We all want to make sure that consumers get safe medications. H.R. 2427 provides access only to FDA-approved drugs manufactured in FDA-approved facilities. There are requirements that drugs must be packaged to prevent tampering. There is not a single documented death from imported drugs, and we have the means to maintain that record.*

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*We all know that the reason the drug industry is pulling out all the stops to prevent passage of the Pharmaceutical Access Act is not their concern about safety, it is their concern about their profits. We could put every safety protection in a reimportation bill and the U.S. drug industry will still oppose it. They will oppose any bill that prevents U.S. consumers from being held hostage to their price-gouging practices.□□*

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*If this body is unwilling to take on the drug industry here at home, the least that we can do is to ensure that U.S. consumers will have access to safe and affordable drugs through reimportation. We should pass H.R. 2427 but, in doing so, we should not be too quick to claim victory. We should not be proud of telling our constituents that they must rely on the actions of foreign governments to provide them with affordable medications. The real solution - the solution of which we could all be proud - would be if we were willing to join those governments in confronting the power and greed of the pharmaceutical industry.*