

JULY 11, 2002

ROLL BACK DRUG PRICES! PATRIOTS BUS TOUR ARRIVES ON CAPITOL HILL

SENIORS TIRED OF TRAVELING TO CANADA COME TO WASHINGTON DEMANDING A REAL DRUG BENEFIT UNDER MEDICARE

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Congressional leaders today joined hundreds of seniors to demand lower prices for prescription medicines and a drug benefit under Medicare that is voluntary and affordable. Six buses carrying seniors arrived on Capitol Hill in time for the Senate debate on a prescription drug bill. Seniors traveled through New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland on the Roll Back Drug Prices! Patriots Bus Tour. The House passed a sham drug company-backed Republican prescription drug plan last month.

"You are here to remind us that homeland security is not just about protecting our borders but about protecting the health and financial security of senior citizens and persons with disabilities and their families. You patriots who have ridden the bus today represent many more patriots across the country who want Congress to act to meet their needs, not protect the greed of the pharmaceutical companies," Schakowsky said.

Ray and Gaylee Andrews of Elk Grove Village, Illinois, who pay \$12,600 annually for prescription drugs to survive, traveled to Washington to demand relief. Both are in their seventies and suffer from multiple illnesses including diabetes, emphysema, arthritis, high blood pressure and cholesterol, and other serious ailments.

"You have been waiting a very long time for an affordable, comprehensive Medicare drug benefit. You should not have to wait any longer," Schakowsky said.

Medicare beneficiaries -- seniors and people with disabilities -- are the heaviest users of prescription drugs, yet there is no outpatient drug benefit in Medicare to help them pay for the prescriptions they need.

- **Seniors account for 43 cents of every dollar spent in the US on prescription drugs.**

- **Medicare beneficiaries spend, on average, more than \$1,000 per year out-of-pocket on prescription drugs.**

- **Twenty-seven percent of Medicare beneficiaries do not have any prescription drug insurance.**

Schakowsky, who signed an online petition, http://www.house.gov/htbin/leave_site?Inurl=http://www.fairdrugprices.org/, calling for affordable and voluntary prescription drug benefit through Medicare, urged seniors and persons with disabilities to use this and other measures to ensure that their voices are heard.

The Roll Back Drug Prices and *Patriots Bus Tour* is sponsored by [USAction](#) and cosponsored by

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