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SCHAKOWSKY SIGNS PETITION CALLING FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

http://www.house.gov/htbin/leave_site?In_url=http://www.fairdrugprices.org/

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today signed an online petition, http://www.house.gov/htbin/leave_site?In_url=http://www.fairdrugprices.org/, calling for an affordable and voluntary prescription drug benefit through Medicare. House and Senate Democrats launched the petition at a news conference.

"Senior citizens are cutting pills in half to make their prescriptions last longer or risking strokes or heart attacks by not taking their pills at all. Those senior citizens, their families and every person who is being price-gouged for their medications are looking to us for relief. Democrats are ready to provide that relief with a comprehensive, affordable, and voluntary prescription drug benefit under Medicare," 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.

At the same time that millions lack drug coverage, drug prices are rising well above the rate of inflation. Ever rising drug prices hit the millions who lack drug coverage -- particularly Medicare beneficiaries -- the hardest.

- From 1997 through 2001, national spending on prescription drugs rose almost 20 percent each year.
- From January 1996 to January 2001, the prices of the prescription drugs most frequently used by seniors rose nearly twice the rate of inflation.