

APRIL 11, 2000

SCHAKOWSKY BLASTS PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY NEW SLICK AD CAMPAIGN

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), a cosponsor of legislation to lower prescription drug costs for seniors, called the recent ads by the pharmaceutical industry "another shameless attempt to protect profit margins on the backs of seniors."

The ads, appearing on television, radio, and newspapers nationwide, attack seniors' trips to Canada to purchase affordable prescription drugs. These ads are designed to influence debate in Congress on pending bills that would lower the cost of prescription drugs for seniors and to scuttle attempts to add a drug benefit to Medicare.

"The drug companies are pulling the old bait and switch. They are using a slick and expensive ad campaign to divert attention away from the fact that they are price gouging American seniors. No matter what the drug companies do or say or how much money they spend to invade our airwaves, the truth remains -- this is an industry that will stop at nothing to protect its profit margin," Schakowsky said.

"Here are the indisputable facts about the pharmaceutical industry. This industry is the most profitable in the world; it gets billions of dollars in government assistance; and it charges other countries less money for the same drugs sold here in the United States. Another indisputable fact about this industry is that it is forcing American seniors to cross the border to get cheaper prescription drugs. This is wrong and we are here to force permanent change that will benefit millions of seniors," Schakowsky added.

Schakowsky is a cosponsor of H.R. 1885, the International Prescription Drug Parity Act. This bill would allow the United States to import prescription drugs from Canada, leading to lower drug prices. In addition, Schakowsky is a cosponsor of other bills that would make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors.

"Even the drug companies admit in their ads that American seniors have to go to Canada to get affordable drugs. It is no surprise that the industry says that this is bad medicine. The drug companies would rather keep seniors here at home, deny them access to cheap drugs, and charge them exorbitant prices," Schakowsky said.

Schakowsky had released three reports last year that found that pharmaceutical companies are gouging seniors. A report found that seniors living in the Chicago area pay 80% more for the same drugs sold in Mexico and Canada. Another report found that drug manufacturers on average charge more than twice as much when drugs are intended for human use than for animal use. Finally, a report concluded that uninsured seniors living in the Chicago area pay 114% more for their medications as compared to HMOs and insurance companies.