

October 2, 2009

To: NRLN Grassroots Network Members

From: NRLN President Bill Kadereit

Subject: NRLN Action Alert: Tell Senators to Stand Up for Retirees on Prescription Drugs

Recently, during the Senate Finance Committee's mark up of its Health Care Reform bill committee members rejected, by the narrow vote of 10-13, an amendment that would have filled the "doughnut hole" in the Medicare Part D prescription drug program. This was a terrible blow to retirees who desperately need to have lower prescription drug prices.

The amendment offered by Senator Bill Nelson would have reestablished the annual rebates drug makers used to pay the government based on their sales to Medicaid beneficiaries. It would have provided \$106 billion to fill the "doughnut hole." Furthermore, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the rebate program would have raised about \$50 billion more than needed to pay for the higher prescription drug spending.

I am asking NRLN Grassroots Network members to immediately send the NRLN's sample letter to your senators to urge them to support the NRLN's proposals for prescription drug legislation. The NRLN advocates eliminating the "doughnut hole" and applying free market competition while also supporting safety in the production and marketing of prescription drugs through prescription drug reimportation. Congress should enable the safe and controlled importation and competitive bidding of prescription drugs and robust formularies. Furthermore, Congress should ensure that the FDA accelerates access to generic prescription drugs. Backlogs of generic drugs awaiting approval have exceeded 5 years and must be eliminated through providing adequate staff needed to expedite approvals. Equally important, agreements that restrain competition between brand and generic manufacturers such as pay-offs that keep lower-priced generic drugs off the market must be outlawed.

To access the NRLN's sample letter go to <http://capwiz.com/abtr/home/> to access the Action Alert. Look for the Action Alert headline: SENATORS SHOULD STAND UP FOR RETIREES ON PRESCRIPTION DRUGS. Click on "Take Action." On the next screen, type in your zip code and click "GO" to access the sample letter to email to your Senators. Be sure to personalize the letter with your own comments about prescription drugs. If you have a problem accessing the Action Alert with the above link, go to www.nrln.org and click on the "Take Action Now" headline at the top of the NRLN Website's Home Page.

It is imperative that Congress move swiftly to ease the burden of prescription drug costs for retirees. Your letters to your Senators can help to make this happen.

Bill Kadereit, President
National Retiree Legislative Network