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***NRLN is a coalition of 24 associations  
advocating the rights of 2.1 million  
American retirees from...***

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July 22, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
235 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-0508

Dear Madam Speaker:

As the President of the National Retiree Legislative Network which represents the interests of more than 2 million retirees from 50 states, I have been closely following the news reports on the deliberations in the U.S. House of Representatives on national health care reform legislation. While progress is being made, I believe that Americans could be provided with immediate health care savings if Congress would include provisions which would:

1. Allow full importation of safe, less expensive prescription drugs from countries certified by the Federal Drug Administration.
2. Adequately fund the FDA to properly oversee prescription drug imports.
3. Sufficiently staff the FDA to reduce the backlog of generic drugs and streamline the process to bring generic drugs to the market in a timelier manner, and fund these activities through fees from the drug companies.
4. Implement competitive bidding for prescription drugs by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, including establishing a national formulary. Competitive bidding has proven to be very cost-effective for participants in the Veterans Administration health care program and it can achieve similar results for the CMS.
5. Pass a resolution asking the Attorney General to take legal action against drug companies that collude verbally or by contract to control pricing or subvert free market practices by paying off generic manufacturers for withholding the introduction of generic drugs until brand name patents expire or for any other reason, a.k.a. "pay-for-delay or "reverse payments" deals.
6. Ask the Congressional Budget Office to conduct a study to determine the cost savings to be gained from these actions.

I am confident that the CBO will find that these actions would save far more than the agreement that was struck by the White House with the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) designed to find \$80 billion in savings over the next 10 years. The pharmaceutical industry has made the \$80 billion in promised health care savings sound like it is a sufficiently good deal for Americans that no other legislative initiatives are necessary. However, even if that \$80 billion in voluntary savings could be enforced, it represents less than 3 percent of the projected dollars that Americans will spend on drugs during the next 10 years.

(More)

Congress must take action that is in the best interest of all Americans and reducing the cost of prescription drugs will benefit our nation's citizens. U.S. drug makers should have global competition just as other American industries must compete with products from foreign countries. The NRLN is passionate about this issue because too many retirees have to decide between spending much of their fixed income for medicines, buying food, or paying the mortgage or rent.

If there is anything that the NRLN can do to help make the case for immediately passing legislation to achieve savings on prescription drugs, please contact Marta Bascom, the NRLN's Executive Director in Washington, DC. She can be reached on 703-863-9611. We look forward to your leadership on this issue of such great importance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Kadereit". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bill Kadereit, President

National Retiree Legislative Network