

I suggest to Members this is the wrong remedy for the problem. We can all agree that is a problem. We can all agree that there is something wrong about the way that drugs are priced in America, and we are working on something in the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. We can all agree that the Medicare system ought to make drugs more affordable; and the copayment is too high when seniors need treatment for cancer therapy.

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But this is a wrong remedy. This lets these operations become legal. It takes away the enforcement arm of the Government designed to protect our seniors from this kind of an operation and says from now on, This is legal, this is okay. You can cook it up in a kitchen in Colombia, and you can cook it up in a kitchen in Thailand, using whatever systems you want, whatever unsanitary conditions you want; and you can ship it into America because we think cheaper drugs are so important, we do not care how unsafe they are.

Mr. Chairman, this Sanders amendment is dangerous. It needs to be defeated.

Mr. GARY MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to speak in opposition to the amendment offered by my colleague from Vermont, Mr. SANDERS.

In 1988, Congress passed legislation that banned the reimportation of prescription drugs because it recognized that there was a significant risk to the American people associated with counterfeit, adulterated or sub-potent medication.

In fact, recognizing the importance of quality prescription drugs, Congress required not only that all domestic distribution centers be licensed, but also that the FDA develop a stringent set of guidelines to regulate domestic prescription drugs.

These guidelines called for detailed record-keeping, including guidelines which outlined very specific temperature and humidity control parameters.

The Sanders Amendment clearly contradicts the reasoning behind these efforts and would instead allow unrestricted reimportation of prescription drugs.

Moreover, the Sanders Amendment would delete the provision which Congress passed last year directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to demonstrate that any cost-savings derived from reimported drugs be passed to the American consumer.

Last December, then-HHS Secretary Donna Shalala found she could not demonstrate that the reimportation law would not jeopardize patient safety, nor could she demonstrate that savings would be passed on to consumers.

Moreover, Mr. SANDERS' amendment would likely lead to an increase in the flow of counterfeit drugs into the U.S., which is already a growing problem the Government cannot control.

At a June 7, 2001 hearing, Ms. Elizabeth Durant, Executive Director of Trade Programs at the U.S. Customs Service, testified that "perhaps as much as 90 percent of the pharmaceuticals that enter the U.S. via the mail do so in a manner that violates FDA and/or DEA requirements. . . . To offer an example, one

seizure included a 3,000-tab shipment of a counterfeit drug with an expiration date of 1980. . . . We have counterfeit drugs. We have gray-market drugs. We have prohibited drugs and we have unapproved drugs. The whole gamut of illegal substances pass through our mail facility at Dulles. And this is a situation that is pretty much replicated around the country."

While I am concerned about the rising cost of pharmaceuticals in the U.S., I am more concerned that Mr. SANDERS' amendment would compromise the health and safety of millions of Americans who count on the quality and purity of pharmaceuticals approved by the FDA to treat their illnesses. What we cannot afford to do is knowingly expose American consumers to drugs and pharmaceuticals that may jeopardize their health, and yet that is precisely what the Sanders amendment would do.

Again, I urge my colleagues to put the welfare of Americans first and vote against the Sanders amendment.

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Sanders/Crowley/DeLauro prescription drug reimportation amendment to the Agriculture Appropriations bill. This amendment will lay the groundwork for lowering the cost of prescription drugs in the U.S. by 30–50%.

This amendment will allow prescription drug distributors and pharmacists to purchase FDA-approved prescription drugs from anywhere in the world at competitive and reasonable prices.

It is a shame that millions of Americans are not able to afford the outrageously high cost of prescription drugs in this country. Their quality of life continues to deteriorate while we continue to limit their access to basic health necessities.

Citizens of the United States pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. Many of our constituents will travel to Mexico or Canada to buy the same drugs for a lesser value. In my district in California, the average prices that senior citizens must pay are 97% higher than the prices that Canadian consumers pay and 96% higher than the prices that Mexican consumers pay.

For every \$1 spent in the United States for prescription drugs, those same drugs are purchased in Switzerland for .65, the United Kingdom for .64, France for .51, and Italy for .49.

Why should patients have to continually compromise their health while being forced to decide which prescription drugs to buy and which drugs not to take because they cannot afford to pay for all of them. These patients cannot afford to pay such burdensome costs.

These patients are forced to gamble with their health when they cannot afford to pay for the drugs needed to treat their conditions. Every day, these patients have to live with the fear of having to encounter major medical problems because they were denied access to prescription drugs they could not afford to pay out of their pocket. Often times, these individuals must choose between buying food or medicine. With outrageously high energy costs in California right now, some seniors and other Californians have to choose between paying their electric bill or their drug bills. This is wrong!

All Americans should be entitled to medical treatment at affordable prices. The Sanders/Crowley/DeLauro amendment will allow these

patients to buy the prescription drugs needed to lead a healthy and productive life.

This amendment will break the monopoly the pharmaceutical industry now has over reimportation.

Let's stop gambling with the lives of our patients and support this reimportation amendment in order to cut these outrageous prescription drug prices. Americans deserve the right to lead healthy lives by purchasing prescription drugs at reasonable and competitive prices.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the amendment offered by the gentleman from Vermont. As I am sure I need not remind my colleagues, many Americans are concerned about the high prices of prescription drugs. The high prices of prescription drugs particularly effect low-income senior citizens since many seniors have a greater than-average need for prescription drugs. One of the reasons prescription drug prices are high is because of government policies which give a few powerful companies a monopoly position in the prescription drug market. One of the most egregious of those policies are those restricting the importation of quality pharmaceuticals. If members of Congress are serious about lowering prescription drug prices they should support this amendment.

As a representative of an area near the Texas-Mexican border I often hear from constituents angry that they cannot purchase inexpensive quality pharmaceuticals in their local drug store. Many of these constituents regularly travel to Mexico on their own in order to purchase pharmaceuticals. Mr. Chairman, where does the federal government get the Constitutional or moral right to tell my constituents they cannot have access to the pharmaceuticals of their choice?

Opponents of this amendment have been waging a hysterical campaign to convince members that this amendment will result in consumers purchasing unsafe products. I dispute this claim for several reasons. Unlike the opponents of this amendment I do not believe that consumers will purchase an inferior pharmaceutical simply to save money. Instead, consumers will carefully shop to make sure they are receiving the highest possible quality at the lowest possible price. In fact, the experience of my constituents who are currently traveling to Mexico to purchase prescription drugs shows that consumers are quite capable of ensuring they only purchase safe products without interference from Big Brother.

Furthermore, if the supporters of the status quo were truly concerned about promoting health, instead of protecting the special privileges of powerful companies, they would consider how our current policies endanger safety by artificially raising the cost of prescription drugs. Oftentimes lower income Americans will take less than the proper amount of a prescription medicine in order to save money or forgo other necessities, including food, in order to afford their medications.

Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues to show they are serious about lowering the prices of prescription drugs and that they trust the people to know what is in their best interest by voting for the Sanders amendment to the Agricultural Appropriations bill.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

I rise in strong support of the Sanders/Crowley/DeLauro/Paul/Rohrabacher amendment.