

***SANDERS LEADS SENIORS, CANCER PATIENTS TO  
CANADA TO PURCHASE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS***

*Congressman Blasts Drug Companies' Greed, Highlights Disparity in  
Price Between U.S., Canada*

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ST. ALBANS, VT - Congressman Bernard Sanders (I-VT) today headed a trip from Vermont to Montreal, Canada, to show how much more prescription drugs cost in the U.S. than in Canada. Joining him were several senior citizens and breast cancer patients, who went to refill their prescriptions. The cost of prescription drugs in the United States is not only far higher than in Canada, they are the most expensive in the world.

Of the 8 prescription drugs purchased at a Montreal pharmacy by the seniors and cancer patients, the price disparity ranged from 32% for Methylprednisolone, a drug for severe asthma and rheumatoid arthritis, to 1122% for Tamoxifen, a drug to treat breast cancer. While a month's supply of Tamoxifen sells for \$156.42 in the United States, it was purchased today for only \$12.80. Similar studies conducted by the minority staff of the House Government Reform Committee showed that seniors in Vermont pay an astounding 81% more than Canadians for the ten drugs they most commonly use. The price disparity is even worse in Mexico- where these drugs cost 112% less than in Vermont. These differences in price have been consistent throughout the United States.

Said Sanders, "It is absurd beyond belief that the same prescription drugs manufactured in the U.S. are sold in this country for far higher prices than in Canada. At a time when the pharmaceutical industry is enjoying huge profits, it is an outrage that American senior citizens, the chronically ill and individuals with disabilities are being ripped off big time."

Sanders pointed to data showing that the drug companies are enjoying huge profits. Last year, the top ten drug companies saw average profits of 26%, or \$2.5 billion each. Not too surprisingly, the pharmaceutical industry spent more money in lobbying and campaign contributions than any other industry in the first 18 months of the 1997-98 election cycle - over \$80 million.

Sanders blasted the greed of the pharmaceutical industry and unfair federal law as the main causes of the price disparity between the United States and other nations. "It is currently illegal for American pharmacists and wholesalers to re-import prescription drugs made in the United States and sent to other nations. We need to change this law to allow our seniors, individuals with chronic illness, and anyone needing prescription drugs to benefit from the same low

price in other nations."

The PRIME Institute at the University of Minnesota found that a drug costing \$1 in the United States only cost 71 cents in Germany, 68 cents in Sweden, 65 cents in the United Kingdom, and 51 cents in Italy. Said Sanders, "This is wrong and unfair to Americans and must be changed."

Sanders, along with Congressman Marion Berry (D-AR) and Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO), has introduced legislation which will enable all Americans, regardless of where they live, to take advantage of the lower costs of prescription drugs in foreign countries. The International Prescription Drug Parity Act will allow American pharmacists and wholesalers to purchase prescription drugs from foreign nations as long as they meet strict safety standards and are FDA-approved.