

For Immediate Release
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Grassley: It should be legal to buy prescription drugs from other countries
Senator co-sponsors legislation to increase access to safe, lower-priced pharmaceuticals

WASHINGTON — Sen. Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member of the Committee on Finance, cosponsored legislation introduced today that would make it legal for U.S. consumers to buy safe prescription drugs from other countries.

The bill – the *Pharmaceutical Market Access and Drug Safety Act* – is sponsored by Senators Byron Dorgan, Olympia Snowe and John McCain.

Grassley said it makes common sense that Americans should be able to import prescription drugs. “In the United States, we import everything consumers want, so why not pharmaceuticals? Imports create competition and keep domestic industry more responsive to consumers. It’s a free trade issue.”

The issue has come before Congress for nine years, but the change has never been made.

Grassley was an early and strong supporter of allowing prescription drugs to be imported. The first amendment to do so was considered by the Senate in 2000. Grassley voted for it and those that followed. In 2004, Grassley sponsored his own comprehensive reimportation proposal (S.2307). In 2005, he combined that measure with a proposal sponsored by Dorgan and Snowe (S.334). Those senators reintroduced a version of the legislation in 2007 (S.242), and today’s bill is the same as that proposal.

Grassley said it’s wrong for drug makers to force American consumers to pay more than their fair share of the high cost of research and development, which is the result of making it illegal for Americans to buy prescription drugs from other countries.

Grassley has worked to expand access to prescription drugs for Americans in other ways, too. He is the sponsor of legislation with Senator Herb Kohl to prohibit brand-name and generic pharmaceutical manufacturers from entering into settlements that end up keeping cheaper drugs off the market. In 2003, Grassley sponsored the legislation that created Medicare’s prescription drug benefit and included an extensive program to help low-income Americans access prescription medicines at little to no cost.

Over the last two years, Grassley has looked into how to improve the Food and Drug Administration’s ability to inspect foreign pharmaceutical drug manufacturing facilities to help ensure that America’s increasingly foreign-produced drug supply and pharmaceutical ingredients are both safe and effective. Last year, he introduced legislation with Senator Ted Kennedy which would augment FDA’s resources through the collection of registration and inspection fees and expand the agency’s authority to inspect foreign and domestic manufacturers and importers.

Consumers in the United States pay 60 to 112 percent more for brand-name prescription drugs than consumers in other countries.