

# IMPROVING VETERANS HEALTHCARE

## Fighting Attempts to Overcharge Vets for Rx Drugs



Congressman Crowley meets with Queens Veterans' activist, Regis Quiran (center) and other members of John V. Daniels VFW Hall to talk about Crowley's efforts stop increases in prescription prices for Veterans. Congressman Crowley has also introduced legislation to correct Federal rules that reduce assistance to veterans who receive other non-Federal support based on their veteran status.

Additionally, Congressman Crowley is leading the campaign against the Administration's decision to drastically increase the co-payments veterans are charged for prescription drugs. Congressman Crowley led a letter to the Veterans Administration (VA) along with 57 of his Democratic and Republican colleagues, to overturn the VA's decision to charge veterans more for their necessary medications.

On February 4, 2002, the VA increased veterans' co-payments for prescription medications by 250% from the usual \$2 co-payment to \$7. In addition, the VA proposal also mandates that beginning in 2003 the co-payments for veteran's medications increase annually based on the annual increases in health care and prescription drug costs, meaning drastic annual increases in the price veterans pay for their medications.

While Congressman Crowley understands that the war on terrorism and the need to increase homeland security means belt tightening for everyone, he finds it troubling that the Bush Administration would advocate increasing drug prices for American veterans as a way to raise money to pay for these programs.

As the war on terrorism creates a new generation of veterans, our Country must remain committed to fulfilling our commitment to the men and women who have fought to protect our freedom.

Congressman Crowley will continue to implore President Bush and to the Veterans Administration to make sure that any increases in prescription drug prices do not disproportionately affect financially challenged veterans.



Congressman Joseph Crowley

# MAKING PRESCRIPTION DRUGS AFFORDABLE



Congressman Joseph Crowley  
Queens:  
82-11 37th Avenue, Suite 607  
Jackson Heights, NY 11372  
718.779.1400  
write2joecrowley@mail.house.gov  
Web site: <http://crowley.house.gov>

Bronx:  
2114 Williamsbridge Road  
Bronx, NY 10461  
718.931.1400

Washington:  
312 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
202.225.3965

Congressman Joseph Crowley  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

ECRWSS  
PRE-SORTED STANDARD

SEND TO

# FIGHTING TO MAKE PRESCRIPTIONS AFFORDABLE

**A**s a member of the Democratic Caucus Prescription Drug Task Force Congressman Joseph Crowley is fighting to make prescription drugs more affordable for all seniors in Queens and the Bronx.



Congressman Crowley talks with College Point seniors about his efforts to stop the spiraling cost of prescriptions for New Yorkers.

By helping to treat or even prevent many illnesses that come with age, prescription drugs are adding years of health and longevity to many seniors' lives. At least 85 percent of Medicare beneficiaries nationwide take at least one prescription medicine per day, and, on average, seniors in this country fill 18 prescriptions per year.

Unfortunately, despite the life saving benefits of pharmaceuticals, three out of every five Medicare beneficiaries lack dependable, affordable prescription drug coverage, and over one-quarter of women on Medicare—nearly six million women—lack any prescription drug coverage.

The amount of money Americans spend on prescription drugs has grown at double-digit percentages during most of the last 20 years, as prescription drugs are now the largest out-of-pocket health care cost for seniors.

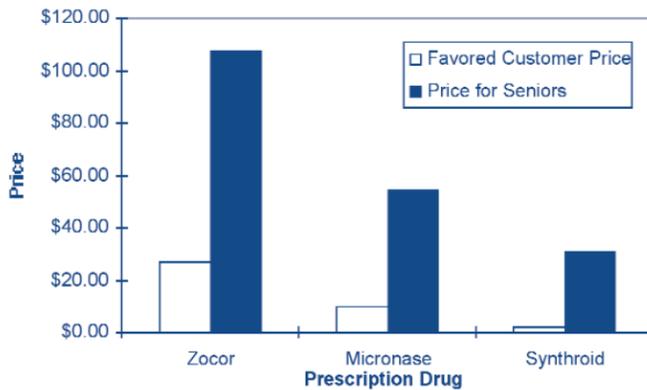
A study commissioned by Congressman Crowley revealed that seniors in Queens and the Bronx pay 140% more for prescription drugs — or more than twice as much — as HMO's, managed care companies, and large hospitals. This is unacceptable.

The rising cost of prescription drugs is just one striking example of how Medicare must change to meet the health care needs of seniors. We face even more changes in the coming years. Only 23 percent of New York firms offer retirees health coverage, and this could be lower in the future as fewer firms offered this coverage in 2000 than in 1998. Nationwide, an increasing number of managed care plans are capping their drug coverage at \$500 or \$1,000. And the number of seniors in New York will almost double by 2025, placing new demands on Medicare.

In Washington, Congressman Crowley is working to create a prescription drug benefit that is voluntary, affordable, and available to all Medicare beneficiaries

He is a cosponsor of the Prescription Drug Fairness Act, which would lower drug costs for our neighborhood pharmacies so that these savings can be passed on to senior citizens. If enacted, this bill would cut the costs seniors pay for their medications by an average of 40% overnight, all

Older Americans in Congressman Crowley's District Pay Inflated Prices for Prescription Drugs.

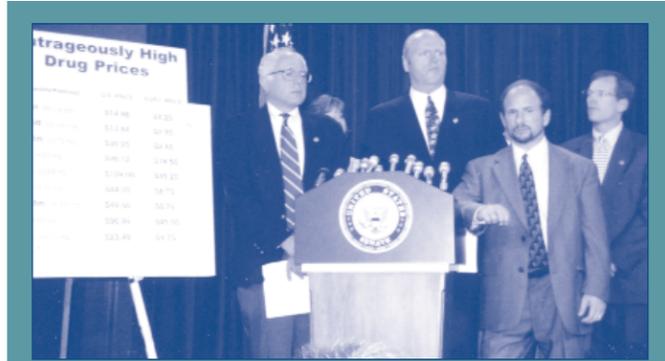


without costing the government one penny. In addition, he is a strong supporter of a bill that would allow individuals to bring into the United States, FDA-approved, safe prescription drugs made in the United States but sold abroad, many times at a far cheaper price

As Congressman Crowley continues his hard work of creating a comprehensive benefit, he is also seeking out smaller, more immediate steps to help seniors afford the increasingly expensive prescription drugs they need to treat or prevent illness.

"Millions of seniors nationwide, including many here in Queens and the Bronx, have to dip into their own pockets to purchase their medications—drugs needed for their health and well being. I know of far too many people who have to choose between paying for medicine and paying for food. In the richest country in the world, this is dead wrong. Drug companies should not profit on the backs of seniors."

Congressman Joseph Crowley



Congressman Crowley urges his colleagues in the House and Senate to pass his legislation that would provide cost savings to seniors by allowing for the re-importation of FDA-approved prescriptions. He is joined by (left to right): Congressman Bernie Sanders (Vermont), Senator Paul Wellstone (Minnesota), and Congressman Jack Kingston (Georgia).

## BRINGING DOWN THE PRICE OF RX MEDICATIONS THROUGH RE-IMPORTATION

Just miles from the United States border, our neighbors pay much less for their name brand American made prescription drugs. Responding to seniors in New York who have to organize bus trips to Canada in order to afford their prescription drugs, Congressman Joseph Crowley led the charge in Congress to allow for the re-importation, or reselling in the United States of FDA approved, safe, American-made pharmaceuticals. These drugs that have been exported abroad to places like Canada, where they often sell for half the cost as they do here at home due to government price controls.

Congressman Crowley led this charge after seeing the results of another report he commissioned that demonstrated that seniors in Canada often pay half as much for the same prescription drugs as do seniors in Queens and the Bronx. In fact, another study by the National Council of Senior Citizens found that, of the top 10 prescription drugs that older Americans use, U.S. citizens in every instance were paying significantly more for the same drugs than were Canadian or Mexican patients.

Congressman Crowley's legislation included strong consumer protections to ensure the safety and quality of the re-imported drugs

Unfortunately, the prescription drug special interest lobby and the Republican majority in Congress defeated the Crowley initiative during Committee negotiations rendering it completely ineffective before it could be enacted – thereby closing a door for seniors to purchase more affordable prescription drugs.

Working with his colleagues in Congress, Congressman Crowley will again try to pass his prescription drug re-importation legislation to make prescription drugs more affordable for everyone.

## CROWLEY'S PRESSURE SUCCEEDS—ALLERGY DRUG CLARITIN TO BE SOLD OVER THE COUNTER

Following to the pressure of Congressman Crowley and American consumers who traveled outside the US to purchase US made drugs, the international drug company Schering-Plough announced that they would make their widely used allergy drug Claritin available over the counter. While this announcement may seem to have been made to help American consumers, it is actually in response to a campaign by California based insurance companies to demand the FDA to re-classify the prescription drug Claritin to an over-the-counter drug like it is sold in Canada, Mexico and Western Europe. One California insurance company named WellPoint spent over \$45 million a year just on Claritin prescriptions. This money was directly passed along to consumers.

Until this recent announcement, Claritin's parent company continued to use obstructionist tactics including attempting to legislatively extend their patent, in order to keep charging high costs for the drug. Claritin is the top selling drug for Schering-Plough and has annual sales of over \$2.3 billion. The announcement that this drug will now be available over the counter is welcome news for the 40 million Americans who suffer from allergies. While Schering-Plough will lose up to \$2 billion a year in sales, American consumers should see the price drop to about \$17 a month. As allergy season approaches, this is good news for all Americans