

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 12, 2007

PRESS RELEASE

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Congresswoman Hirono Calls for Lower Prescription Drug Costs

WASHINGTON, DC - Congresswoman Mazie Hirono cast her first vote in Congress today for a bill which will lower the cost of prescription drugs for seniors.

“America can do better for its seniors,” the Congresswoman said.

Hirono is co-sponsor of H.R. 4 which will require the Department of Health and Human Services to negotiate for lower prescription drug costs for Medicare beneficiaries.

Hirono stated, “Under the existing prescription drug law supported by President Bush, the Department was prohibited from negotiating lower drug prices for seniors. Now DHHS will be required to negotiate lower prices that will benefit our senior citizens, just as the Veterans Administration and private health plans are allowed to do for their clients.”

In her first floor speech at the U.S. Capitol, the Congresswoman pointed out that families across Hawaii and the country – including her own – struggled to understand the new Part D prescription drug plans, only to be saddled with increasing drug costs.

Hirono added, “I am proud to say that in 2002 Hawaii enacted a law creating a similar program to allow negotiating for lower prescription drug costs.

H.R. 4, entitled “The Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007,” is one of six bills in the package of legislation congressional Democrats are ushering through the House in their first 100 hours.

Full text of the one minute floor statement is attached. The bill passed the House by a vote of 257 to 170.

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Statement by Congresswoman Mazie Hirono of Hawaii
in the U.S. House of Representatives
in Support of H.R. 4 Requiring the Department of Health and Human Services
to Negotiate for Lower Prescription Drug Prices

January 12, 2007

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 4.

Talk about an all-American bill – using our purchasing power to lower our costs – something big companies do all the time.

This is why I am so pleased that one of the first pieces of legislation the 110th Congress is considering will help our seniors – our kupuna, as we say in Hawaii – lower their prescription drug costs.

I am proud to say that in 2002 Hawaii enacted a law creating a similar program to allow negotiating for lower prescription drug costs.

Thousands of American families spent countless hours studying the Medicare Part D options. My family was one of those. I sat with my 82 year old mother as we worked our way through the confusing plans.

Unfortunately, many of those families' efforts were not rewarded with the desired outcome: affordable prescription drugs. America can do better for its seniors. By giving Medicare negotiating authority we will take an important step in the right direction.

Mahalo.