

National Black Police Association  
 National League of Cities  
 US Conference of Mayors  
 National Association of Counties  
 US Conference of Catholic Bishops  
 National Education Association  
 American Bar Association  
 NAACP  
 Americans for Gun Safety  
 Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence  
 United with the Million Mom March  
 Church Women United  
 Episcopal Church, USA  
 American Academy of Family Physicians  
 American Public Health Association  
 Family Violence Prevention Fund  
 National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
 National Network to End Domestic Violence  
 National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems  
 National Association of Social Workers  
 Physicians for a Violence Free Society  
 American Association of Suicidology  
 Mothers Against Violence in America  
 Child Welfare League of America  
 Alliance for Justice

#### PHARMACEUTICAL MARKET ACCESS AND DRUG SAFETY ACT OF 2004

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today in support of S. 2328, the Pharmaceutical Market Access and Drug Safety Act of 2004, and to explain my reasons for becoming a cosponsor of this bipartisan legislation, which was introduced by Senators DORGAN and SNOWE earlier this year. My decision to cosponsor this bill has come after serious and careful deliberation. I know that there are many who oppose the importation of prescription drugs, and I have carefully considered their arguments.

However, I have come to the conclusion that this bill can be helpful to ensuring that Americans have access to the drugs they need, with the peace of mind that the medications they are taking—or giving to a family member—are safe.

Mr. President, all of us are aware of the unfortunate news released over the last several weeks about the state of health care in our country. In many respects, we have the greatest health system in the world, but far too many Americans are unable to take advantage of this system. According to data released by the Census Bureau in August, 45 million Americans were without health insurance in 2003—an increase of 1.4 million over 2002. The primary reason for the continued increase in the number of uninsured is that employers are dropping their health coverage. That's right Mr. President, most of the newly-uninsured are working Americans.

Employers are not dropping health coverage out of malice they are doing so because they can no longer afford to provide this benefit. Year after year, health care costs increase by double digit percentages. The cost of employer-sponsored coverage increased by 14 percent in 2003. And year after year, the increase in the cost of prescription drugs stands out as a driver of the

overall cost increase. Over the last three years, drug costs have increased by over 50 percent.

Mr. President, I do not subscribe to or participate in the attacks on our prescription drug industry. The American drug industry is an extraordinary success story. As a result of the innovations that this industry has spawned, millions of lives have been improved and saved in our country and around the globe. Because of the importance of these medicines to our health and well-being, I have consistently supported sound public policies to help the industry to succeed.

These policies include authoring a successful statute to ensure that drug manufacturers receive appropriate incentives for ensuring that their products are safe and effective for children. I have also co-authored legislation to make sure that new drugs can more swiftly move through the approval pipeline and move quickly into the hands of the patients who need them. I have worked to create a fair balance between the need to protect drug patents for their full patent life, and the need to ensure that generic pharmaceuticals are able to come to market when that patent life has expired. I have always encouraged pharmaceutical research and development. I have also supported trade agreements to help open international markets for American pharmaceuticals. The American pharmaceutical industry is the best in the world, and it has succeeded, and will continue to succeed, in a competitive global environment.

Prescription drugs are an absolutely integral part of our health care system. I am proud that many of these medicines are made in my home state of Connecticut. But Mr. President, I am saddened that such a basic and necessary part of modern health care is becoming unaffordable for the average American—including many thousands of men, women, and children in Connecticut. Americans should not be put in the position of choosing whether to purchase groceries or medicine. And yet I have talked to far too many of my constituents who are faced with that choice every day.

We have an obligation to seek opportunities to lower drug costs. I was disappointed that such an opportunity was missed during our consideration of the Medicare Modernization Act. That law now prohibits the Federal government from using its purchasing power to bargain for lower drug prices. Such a measure is inconsistent with the economic principle of competition that is fundamental to our economy.

We are now faced with another opportunity to control prescription drug costs by allowing the importation of FDA-approved prescription drugs from Canada and other industrialized nations. I have long taken the position that drug importation should only be allowed if we can ensure that it is safe. I do not want affordable medicines to come at the cost of quality and safety

for American consumers. I have looked at every importation proposal with these priorities in mind.

Mr. President, Senate bill 2328, while not perfect, is a sensible approach to the issue of drug importation. I believe that it addresses the safety concerns that have been raised in the past, and in my discussions with opponents of this bill, I have yet to hear an argument that makes me believe that the medicines imported under this bill would be unsafe. In fact, I believe that it has the potential to be significantly safer for American consumers than the status quo. Currently, an American can easily go on the Internet and order drugs from another country. But there is no guarantee that these drugs are safe, and no way to prevent these drugs from entering the country. We are being flooded with counterfeit and compromised medicines, and people are being hurt.

Under the Dorgan-Snowe bill, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) would be given the authority and resources necessary to make drug importation a safe proposition. Importers would be required to register with the FDA, so Americans can know where it is safe to purchase imported medicines.

Mr. President, with the issue of safety addressed, this really becomes an issue about what is best and what is fair for American consumers. At the moment, Americans pay significantly more for prescription drugs than those in other industrialized nations. Based on that fact, it is my belief that we should work toward a more open global market for prescription drugs, just as we do for countless other products that we trade internationally.

As I mentioned earlier, I am confident that the American drug industry can compete with that of any other nation. I am committed to ensuring that this continues to be true. We should, in my view, take steps to bring about fairer trade, freer trade, and safer trade for prescription medicines. This legislation represents one such step.

I intend to continue to talk to all interested parties about this bill. If safety concerns should arise in the future that have not been previously considered, I will do everything in my power to address them with the sponsors of this legislation. But it is past time for us to do something about the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs, and I support this bill as a step in the right direction.

#### GARRETT LEE SMITH MEMORIAL ACT

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to Senator SMITH and his family, as yesterday marked the 1-year anniversary of Garrett's passing and today would have been his 23rd birthday. The Smith family has endured a terrible tragedy, but has taken their loss and their pain and committed themselves to raising public awareness about youth suicide and