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Action Toolkit for the Affordable Meds Act

Affordable Meds Now!

A Toolkit for Activists fighting for the campaign to lower drug prices through the Affordable Meds Act.

Congress should pass the Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act (S. 771 & H.R. 1776) without delay.

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Background: Health Care Reform and Drug Prices in the U.S.

It is morally wrong that in the richest country in the world, people are denied access to the medicines they need because they cannot afford them, as is the case for millions of Americans today. Americans support, by wide margins and across party lines, strong action to reduce medicine prices and end the monopoly abuses of prescription drug corporations. It is time for elected leaders to unite behind a real priority for Americans – lowering prescription drug prices.

Prescription drug prices are a leading driver of healthcare costs, and President Trump has repeatedly stated that he's committed to lowering the price of medicines. Yet, the American Health Care Act would have eliminated requirements for insurance companies to provide prescription drug coverage and other basic healthcare necessities at a time when Americans demand greater access to affordable medicines. There is strong evidence that voters want reform in this area -

- The majority of Americans (61%) say lowering the cost of prescription drugs should be a "top priority" for Congress and the Trump administration (Kaiser Poll, Healthcare Priorities for 2017)
- 77% of Americans say prescription drug costs are unreasonable (Kaiser 2016 Poll)
- 86% of Americans favor requiring drug companies to release information to the public on how they set drug prices (Kaiser 2016 Poll)
- 82% of Americans favor allowing the federal government to negotiate with drug companies to get a lower price on medications for people on Medicare (Kaiser 2016 Poll)
- 75% of Americans favor shortening the length of monopoly granted on prescription drugs so that cheaper generic drugs are made available sooner (Lake Research Partners Poll)

Taxpayer dollars drive medical innovation, and taxpayers deserve more in return for their support. Instead, Americans pay the highest prices in the world for pharmaceuticals, or as is often the case, go without treatment because the medicine they need is unaffordable. Nearly one in five American adults aged 55 and older report skipping doses or not filling a prescription within the last 12 months because of cost. This is unacceptable.

The *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act* (Affordable Meds Act) would bring down prescription drug prices and effectively challenge the pharmaceutical corporations' economic and political power. It is sensible, long-needed, comprehensive and worthy of broad-based bipartisan support.

Among other reforms, the Affordable Meds Act would curb the monopoly abuses of prescription drug corporations that keep prices high, penalize companies that engage in price gouging, finally allow Medicare to negotiate fair prices for seniors, cap out-of-pocket medicine costs in health insurance plans and require transparency from the pharmaceutical industry.

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Talking Points

- There is a big problem around prescription drug prices in the U.S. Nearly one in five American adults aged 55 and older report skipping doses or not filling a prescription within the last 12 months because of cost and prescription drug prices are a leading driver of healthcare costs.
- We are ready for a change. The majority of Americans (61%) say lowering the cost of prescription drugs should be a "top priority" for Congress and the Trump administration.
- The Affordable Meds Act would work to reform many of the systems and rules we have in place that allow prescription drug corporations to price gouge consumers.
- By passing this bill without delay, members of Congress will bring down prescription drug prices, save billions in health care costs, and help ensure a brighter future for Americans of all walks of life.

Cosponsors, Key committees and their members

Cosponsors of the bill in the Senate (S. 771) as of 4/13/2017:

Sens. Al Franken (D-Minn.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Tom Udall (D-N.M.) Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Cory Booker (D-N.J.)

Cosponsors in the House of Representatives (H.R. 1776) as of 4/13/2017:

U.S. Reps. Janice Schakowsky (D-Ill.), Elijah Cummings (D-Md.), Peter Welch (D-Vt.), Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.), Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.), Mark Pocan (D-Wis.), John Conyers (D-Mich.) and Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Key Committees in both chambers of Congress:

The bill comes up in the following committees' jurisdictions, which makes their members prime targets for grassroots outreach (click links to see membership):

Senate: Finance; Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; Judiciary

House of Representatives: Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Judiciary

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Town Hall Questions

One of the best tools we can use to get things through to our elected officials is to show up at their town halls and get time with them face-to-face.

Please visit TownHallProject.com to find out about upcoming town halls in your area. Visit ResistanceNearMe.com, an organizing hub for local #resist actions, to help you find any public event, rally, town hall or protest in your state, as well as how to contact your senators and member of Congress. And visit ResistanceRecess.com, MoveOn's database of resistance events.

Reminders for a town hall:

1. Raise your hand first, fast, and high – BE the kid who annoyed you in 7th grade.
2. Tips to get picked for Q&A:
    a. Be enthusiastic and interested.
    b. Make eye contact with the speaker or moderator at every chance you can.
    c. Shake hands with the moderator.
    d. Position yourself near any microphones set up in the audience.
3. Write down your question and PRACTICE it before you ask it.
4. Record your answer (have a friend with a cell phone do it).
5. Report back the answer (talk to media if you'd like as well).
    a. Send a message to your organizers, and jmendoza@citizen.org to let us know how it went.

For a Cosponsor:

Long (30 sec, Q&A):

- My name is X, I live right here in Y, and I'm concerned about high drug prices. [add 1 sentence personal story if possible – i.e. "My mother pays a ridiculous amount of money for her insulin, even though she's got insurance." – *If no story* – "I saw recently that 75% of Americans want lower drug prices"], so I was excited to see you co-sponsor a bill that is all about lowering the prices of prescription drugs. Will you make that bill a big priority and push your colleagues to help pass it as soon as it's possible, ["for my mom" and] many Americans who want lower drug prices?

Short (handshake line):

- Thank you for cosponsoring the *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act*. Will you make it a big priority for your office to reach out get this passed as soon as possible?

For a Committee Member:

Long (30 sec, Q&A):

- My name is X, I live here in Y, and I'm concerned about protecting our health care, in particular pushing back against high drug prices. [add 1 sentence personal story if possible – i.e. "My mother pays a ridiculous amount of money for her insulin, even though she's got insurance." – *If no story* – "I saw recently that 75% of Americans want lower drug prices"] I recently heard that a bill was introduced on affordable prescription drugs (The *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act*) and it looks like you'll get to weigh in on it. Will you help make sure that the bill comes up for a vote in Congress?

Short (handshake line):

- The *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act* was just introduced, and it looks like you get to vote on it first. Will you support this bill to bring down drug prices for me and my family by making sure it gets through your committee?

For a Democrat:

Long (30 sec, Q&A):

- My name is X, I live here in Y, and I'm concerned about improving the legacy of the ACA (or Obamacare) by fighting high drug prices. [add 1 sentence personal story if possible – i.e. "My mother pays a ridiculous amount of money for her insulin, even though she's got insurance." – *If no story* – "I saw in a poll that 75% of Americans want lower drug prices"] Now dozens of your colleagues in the Democratic party are backing a bill to lower drug prices (the *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act*). Will you commit today to backing this bill to help get it passed as soon as possible?

Short (handshake line):

- Democrats in the Senate and the House just introduced a comprehensive bill for Affordable Medicines (the *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act*). Will you be backing the bill to help lower drug prices for me and my family?

For a Republican:

Long (30 sec, Q&A):

- My name is X, I live here in Y, and I am concerned about the priorities of the Republican Party in health care. The last healthcare bill to repeal Obamacare did nothing to protect against high drug prices. But, [add 1 sentence personal story if possible – i.e. "My mother pays a ridiculous amount of money for her insulin, even though she's got insurance." – *If no story* – "I saw in a poll that 75% of Americans want lower drug prices"]. Will you work across the aisle to deliver on President Trump's promise to lower drug prices and pass the *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act*?

Short (handshake line):

- The bill Republicans worked on for healthcare doesn't lower prescription drug prices. Will you work to pass the current bill proposed for affordable medicines, the *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act*?

For Paul Ryan:

Long (30 sec, Q&A):

- Your last health care bill failed to meet the needs of my family. In particular, it didn't include anything on the high prices of prescription drugs. [add 1 sentence personal story if possible – i.e. "My mother pays a ridiculous amount of money for her insulin, even though she's got insurance." – *If no story* – "I saw in a poll that 75% of Americans want lower drug prices"]. Will you work across the aisle to pass the new comprehensive bill for Affordable Medicines (the *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act*)?

Short (handshake line):

- Your last health care bill didn't do anything to lower prescription drug prices for me and my family. Will you commit to working on it with the new comprehensive bill to lower drug prices (the *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act*)?

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Call Script

Can't make it in person? Please call your representative and senators. When you call, be polite but firm. Make sure to say that you are from your member's district or home state.

- To reach the offices of your representative or senators, call the capitol switchboard and they'll connect you: 202-224-3121
- Look up your elected officials on GovTrack: https://www.govtrack.us/

They often will ask for your address – don't be afraid, it's just to verify you are a constituent.

Hi, my name is ____ and I'm calling from (City, State). I'd like to leave a message for Senator/Representative _____.

I'm calling to express my concern over health care and prescription drug prices. The recent attempts to repeal and replace Obamacare have completely missed the mark on high medicine prices. I would like to see Senator/Representative _____ work to pass the *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act*.

Please become a cosponsor, issue a public statement supporting the bill, and help it get to a vote by calling on the appropriate committee chairs. Thank you.

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Crafting a Letter to the Editor

A *Letter to the Editor (LTE)* is a letter sent to a publication about issues of concern from its readers. Letters to the editor are typically 150 words (that's short!) and have a single main point and single author (you). A letter to the editor should be positive and current to hook in readers, while focusing on a clear and concise message about a problem.

Let's practice!

What is the publication in which you are looking to get published?

What are the publication's rules for submitting Letters to the Editor? (Hint: Use Google "[Name of Publication] LTE Submission")

What is the problem you would like to discuss? (Ex. Drug prices in the U.S. leave far too many struggling to make ends meet, and more than 75% of Americans believe drug prices are too high.)

What is the solution? (Ex. We need comprehensive reform to the way we price drugs and the power we give to companies.)

What needs to happen to reach this solution? (Ex. Congress must pass the *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act*)

Why is it relevant/what is the hook? (Ex. Last month the so-called *Affordable Health Care Act* went down in flames, Congress should focus on the real priority for Americans – lowering prescription drug prices.)

Can you explain this in 100-300 words? (Draft it below):

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Social Media Sample Tweets and Images:

Hints for tweets:

- Target your tweets to your Representative or Senator. Here's a list of their twitter accounts.
- Use #AffordableMedsNow
- Use an image!

Draft Tweets:

- Stand with us to #ProtectOurCare. Demand #AffordableMedsNow
- Rx Drugs are a leading driver of #healthcare costs. Demand #AffordableMedsNow
- I can't believe #AHCA didn't try to lower Rx prices. We need #AffordableMedsNow #ProtectOurCare
- Time is running out: make meds affordable for those on #Medicare. #AffordableMedsNow #ProtectOurCare
- Americans pay the most for Rx drugs. Pass #AffordableMedsNow #ProtectOurCare
- In 2014: 375,000 Americans payed over $250 per month for their Rx drugs. We need #AffordableMedsNow #ProtectOurCare
- Make #prescriptions affordable for seniors! #AffordableMedsNow #ProtectOurCare
- We are ready for a change. #AffordableMedsNow #ProtectOurCare

Images for use:

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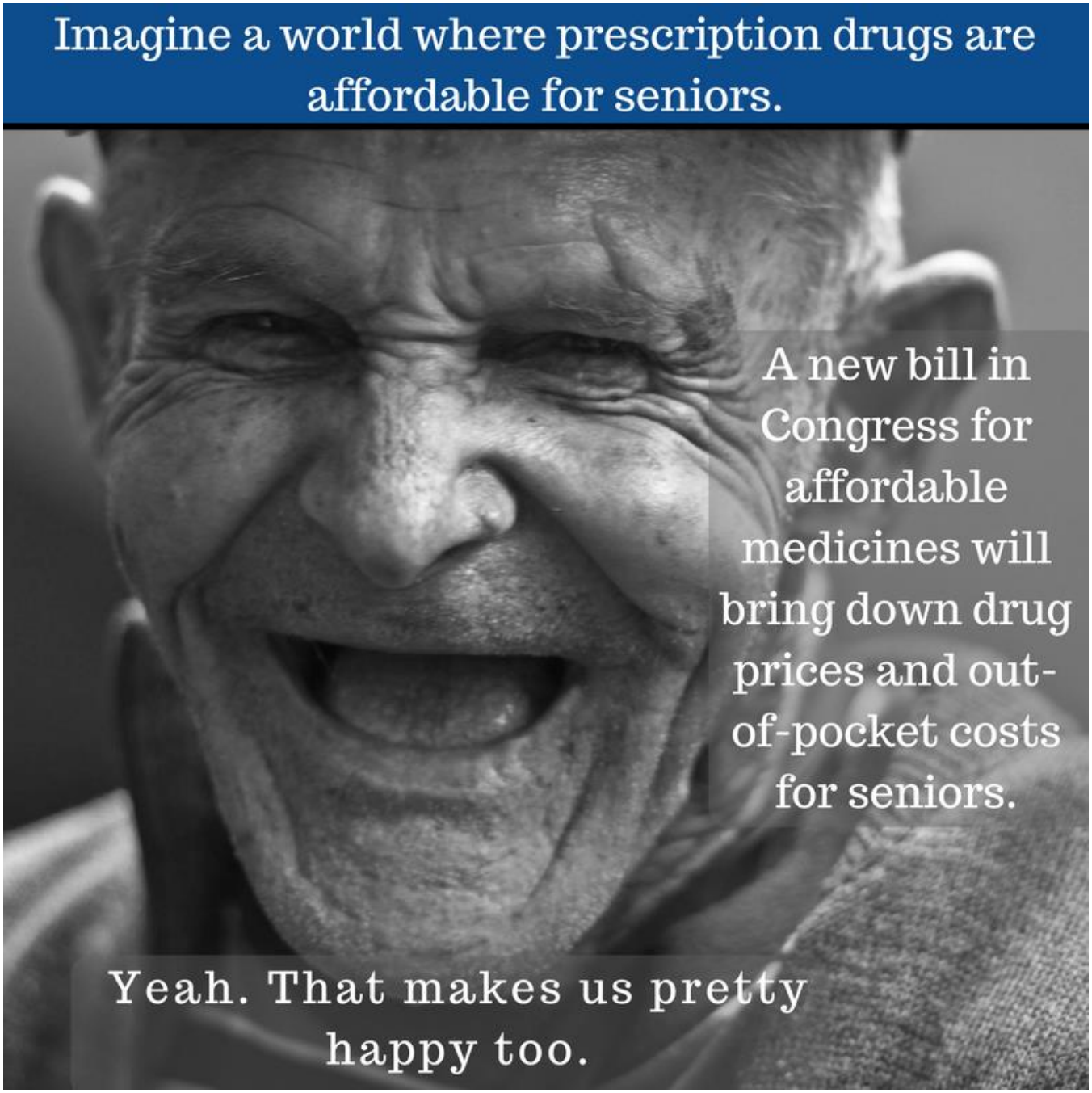

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