



Senate passes Durbin-Grassley amendment to take on big pharma, require disclosure of drug prices in TV ads

August 24 2018 8:46 AM

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the Senate passed a bipartisan amendment introduced by U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Chuck Grassley (R-IA) to the Defense-Labor-HHS-Education appropriations “minibus” package that provides the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) with \$1 million to implement rules requiring pharmaceutical companies to list prices of their prescription drugs in direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertisements. The amendment helps to empower patients, promote transparency, and lower prescription drug costs.

“This drug pricing proposal was supported by both Democratic and Republican senators, the American Association of Retired Persons, the American Medical Association, America’s health insurance plans, 76 percent of the American people, President Donald Trump, and the Department of Health and Human Services. The only group who opposed it? Big Pharma,” Durbin said. “What Senator Grassley and I wanted to do is to give the American people more information about drug costs. More information gives transparency to the transaction, and will help give American consumers a break and start to slow down the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs.”

“What we’ve been trying to do is pretty simple. Bringing transparency to drug pricing and educating the public about the cost of their prescriptions is common sense. We’re building on what the pharmaceutical industry is already doing. In their ads, these companies educate consumers on new drugs and their side effects. This bill goes one step further by educating the public on pricing. That’s why there’s a broad coalition of support for this legislation. This is long overdue and will be a great service to health care consumers throughout the country. I’d like to thank Senator Durbin for leading this effort. I said we’d get this done, and I’m glad to say that we have,” Grassley said.

Both Durbin and Grassley spoke on the Senate floor earlier today urging their colleagues to support their bipartisan amendment.

Video of Durbin and Grassley's floor remarks is available [here](#).

Audio of Durbin and Grassley's floor remarks is available [here](#).

Last year, the pharmaceutical industry spent more than \$6 billion in DTC advertisements, which drive up health care costs by steering patients towards more expensive, often unnecessary medications. The average American sees nine DTC prescription drug ads each day. Studies show that patients are more likely to ask their doctor for a specific brand-name medication, and doctors are more likely to prescribe one, when they have been marketed directly with drug advertisements. For these reasons, most countries have banned DTC prescription drug advertising, with the United States and New Zealand being the only two developed countries that allow it. The American Medical Association has called for a ban on DTC prescription drug advertisements, as well as mandatory price disclosure as part of prescription drug marketing.

In November 2017, Durbin [introduced](#) legislation that would require the pharmaceutical industry to provide more information about the cost of drugs in their advertisements. The *Drug-price Transparency in Communications (DTC) Act of 2017* would require drug companies to disclose the Wholesale Acquisition Cost (WAC) of a prescription medication in direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising and in marketing to prescribers.