

(March 10, 2005) Congressman Lipinski Calls on Congress and the Food and Drug Administration

Congressman Lipinski Calls on Congress and the Food and Drug Administration to Investigate Prilosec Shortage

WASHINGTON, DC - Today Congressman Dan Lipinski called for a thorough investigation into the continued shortage of popular over-the-counter heartburn drug Prilosec OTC. This investigation would determine if the shortage is deliberate on the part of the drug manufacturer AstraZeneca.

For over a year now, supplies of Prilosec OTC have fallen far short of demand. AstraZeneca, the British drug company that owns the rights to Prilosec OTC, and their marketing partner, Procter & Gamble, claim to have merely underestimated demand for the drug. While the shortage has been hurting consumers, it has not financially hurt AstraZeneca. In fact, the shortage has increased sales of Nexium, a far more expensive prescription heartburn drug that AstraZeneca also sells.

"It is outrageous to think that consumers who want a reliable supply of Prilosec OTC are not able to get it," said Lipinski. "Instead, they are forced to get a prescription for a drug that is essentially the same, but that costs five times as much."

Congressman Lipinski sent a letter today to Congressman Joe Barton (R-TX), Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, calling for oversight hearings into the shortage of Prilosec OTC. A second letter has been sent to the FDA seeking an investigation into the shortage.

"Through hearings and an investigation we should be able to determine whether the shortage is an intentional result of the direct or indirect actions of AstraZeneca," said Lipinski. "This shortage demonstrates the need for more effective oversight and competition in the market, not just for over-the-counter heartburn medication, but for all pharmaceuticals."