

(August 24, 2006) Durbin, Lipinski Say the President's Executive Order Did Not Go Far Enough

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[Chicago, IL] - U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and U.S. Representative Daniel Lipinski (D-IL) today said President Bush's Executive Order requiring the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and three other agencies to disclose to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries the cost of medical procedures "did not go far enough." Durbin and Lipinski urged HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt "to exercise the option President Bush has given you and publish these prices in a manner easily accessible to all Americans."

In a letter to Secretary Leavitt, Durbin and Lipinski wrote: "It is the 46 million Americans without health insurance who most need this information. Not only are uninsured Americans often paying out-of-pocket for their care, they are paying rates far higher than insured Americans because they do not have access to the reduced rates negotiated by insurance companies."

Durbin and Lipinski noted that the Executive Order failed to address another important issue: the price Medicare is paying for prescription drugs. "Given the investment the federal government is now making in prescription drugs, it is imperative that we receive the best possible price. Without knowing the actual prices that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is paying for pharmaceuticals in Medicare and Medicaid, it is impossible to compare," they wrote.

Lipinski and Durbin are the chief sponsors of bipartisan legislation requiring hospitals to report the prices of the 25 most frequently performed in-patient and out-patient procedures and the 50 most commonly prescribed drugs. The Hospital Price Reporting and Disclosure Act will provide uninsured Americans with information to protect them against price gouging.

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