



August 6, 2003

The Honorable Rahm Emanuel  
1319 Longworth House Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gil Gutknecht  
425 Cannon House Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-2301

Dear Representatives Emanuel and Gutknecht:

I am writing to commend you and your colleagues for your commitment to finding ways to make prescription drugs more affordable for older Americans. AARP believes that carefully crafted re-importation provisions can be a step in that direction, and we want to work with you to achieve this objective.

It is a national embarrassment that in a country with the most advanced medical system in the world, so many of our citizens, often on fixed incomes and with limited resources, can obtain affordable prescription drugs only by seeking them in foreign countries.

Re-importation is not a panacea for the problem of soaring drug costs. But it does hold the potential to place some downward pressure on the double-digit increases in costs that Americans face each year. A much broader array of cost-containment strategies needs to be implemented. By far the most important step to make drugs affordable for older Americans and their families is the enactment of prescription drug coverage in Medicare.

AARP understands and shares the concern that re-importation could threaten drug safety. Therefore, we strongly support policies that will ensure confidence in the safety and integrity of re-imported medications. We believe that safety concerns can be minimized by restricting the legal source of re-importation to Canada—from licensed Canadian pharmacies and wholesalers—for a defined period of time. That country is already the source of considerable defacto re-importation and safety violations appear to be minimal in extent and insignificant in nature.

It is important that FDA be provided the resources and authority to ensure the safety of re-imported drugs from Canada, and that technological and other safeguards be employed.

In addition, improving safety through re-importation responds to the reality that thousands of Americans are now purchasing drugs from abroad, without proper

re-importation regulations in place. And many others are putting their health at risk by not taking prescribed medicines simply because they cannot afford to purchase them.

In conclusion, AARP welcomes the opportunity to join with you and your colleagues to address the ways to achieve affordable prescription drugs for our members and for all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William D. Novelli".

William D. Novelli