

*House expected to pass legislation requiring prescription drug price negotiations later today*

Washington, DC -- Rep. Peter Welch today spoke on the House floor in support of Medicare Part D reform, legislation that will require the federal government to negotiate prescription drug prices as part of the drug benefit program.

"There is no more vivid example of special interests trumping the public interest than the Medicare Part D legislation that we must reform here today," said Welch, urging support from his colleagues.

Since late 2005, Welch has argued that the federal government should use the purchasing power of more than 42 million seniors in the program to negotiate lower drug prices, delivering lower premiums to seniors and helping all taxpayers. The Department of Veterans Affairs currently uses its negotiating power to achieve prices 80 percent lower than the Part D program.

H.R. 4 is expected to pass the House this afternoon.

Welch made the following speech on the House floor supporting the reform this morning:

**Peter Welch - Medicare Part D Reform - 1.12.07**

Special interest over the public interest.

There is no more vivid example of special interests trumping the public interest than the Medicare Part D legislation that we must reform here today.

Extending a drug benefit to our seniors on Medicare was the right thing to do. Even in its current form, it has helped thousands of Vermonters and hundreds of thousands of Americans.

However, when this Medicare drug benefit first passed Congress, a worthy extension of a good program went terribly wrong. Because of the wrongheaded prohibition on the federal government's ability to negotiate fair prices, this program fails on the most fundamental level: cost.

The lobbyists who wrote this bill bewildered our seniors and sold out taxpayers. The public interest - the interest of our seniors and our taxpayers - are who we represent here today, by finally helping make this drug benefit right.