



Consumers Union
**PRESCRIPTION
FOR CHANGE**



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Consumers Union has the ‘Drugs You Need!’ Animated Internet Satire Takes on Pharmaceutical Industry

**As Senate holds drug safety hearings today, new spoof buzzes Web;
Draws attention to need for safer, more affordable medicines**

To view, click on www.PrescriptionforChange.org

(Washington, D.C.) – Taking a page from the Internet bloggers’ playbook, public policy advocates at Consumers Union this week are releasing an animated satire of the drug industry – “The Drugs I Need” – to get Americans’ attention about the need for safer, more effective and affordable prescription drugs.

The satire song is being released through the Internet and radio stations as the U.S. Senate holds hearings on the safety of prescription drugs. After viewing the animation, consumers can send an email to Congress asking members to support a bipartisan bill introduced Monday requiring drug companies to make all their studies public so physicians and consumers know about potentially harmful side effects.

“Right now, drug companies can hide negative study results from the public, leaving doctors and patients in the dark about potentially harmful side effects,” said Rob Schneider, director of Consumers Union’s www.PrescriptionforChange.org campaign. “If consumers let their voices be heard through this effort, we can convince Congress to make that information public.”

The animated song, created by the Texas bluegrass band the Austin Lounge Lizards, is a humorous take on drug companies’ billion-dollar marketing budgets, the sometimes serious side effects associated with blockbuster drugs, and the high costs Americans pay. Among the lyrics:

“You’ve got a headache, I’ve got some strange disease
Don’t worry about it, this pill will set your mind at ease
It’s called Progenitorivox, It’s made by SquabbMerlCo
It’s a life-enhancing miracle, but there are some things you should know...
It may cause agitation, palpitations, excessive salivation,
Constipation, male lactation, rust-colored urination
Hallucinations, bad vibrations, mild electric shock sensations
But it’s worth it for the drugs I need.”

“Sometimes humor is the best way to focus attention on a serious problem,” Schneider said. “The Internet is now the place where Americans can go to directly take action on issues that affect their lives. We know consumers can take on the powerful pharmaceutical industry and change the marketplace if they join together.”

(MORE)

On Monday, a bipartisan bill sponsored by Sens. Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) was introduced that would mandate public disclosure of results from all new clinical drug trials. The bill is supported by Consumers Union, Consumer Federation and US PIRG.

The song is part of a new approach to public policy and consumer education by Consumers Union, publisher of *Consumer Reports*. State and federal lawmakers know CU as an organization that provides them with in-depth policy analysis and credible investigative articles from *Consumer Reports*. CU's advocates still provide that value to legislators and regulators. But now they are reaching out to the public in new ways with efforts such as Prescription for Change, an Internet-based advocacy campaign.

Since the campaign's creation in November, consumers using the Web site have helped get bills filed in more than 15 states to make drug trials public and promote transparency in the prescription drug marketplace.

“State legislatures are willing to take on the powerful drug industry. Now Congress must step forward and do its part to make sure prescription drugs are safe, effective and affordable,” he said.

In addition to its advocacy effort, Consumers Union has launched a public-education effort, *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs*, which provides unbiased information on the effectiveness, safety and cost of prescription drugs.

At the FREE website, www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org, consumers can view reports on four drug categories – arthritis pain medication (NSAIDS), cholesterol reducing drugs, heartburn treatment and antidepressants. The project identifies Best Buys in each category to help consumers stretch their health-care dollars, and will add a new drug category each month.

“For too long we’ve been at the mercy of drug company advertising. It’s time consumers had unbiased information on the medicines they take,” Schneider said. “When consumers know about drug safety, effectiveness and cost, they can choose medicines with their doctor that make the most sense for them.”