

(**Washington D.C.**) - Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA-03) joined U.S. Reps. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD-03), Marion Berry (D-AR-01) and 40 other House Democrats in sending a letter to House and Senate conferees to the FY 2007 National Defense Authorization Bill urging them to adopt a provision requiring drug manufacturers to give discounts to the Department of Defense (DoD) for retail drugs purchased by members of the military and their families.

The Veterans Health Care Act of 1992 directs drug manufacturers to provide discounts on pharmaceuticals supplied to DoD, providing a huge savings to the government. Despite the law, some manufacturers refuse to grant DoD discounts for drugs purchased through the TRICARE retail program, although they do provide the discount for drugs purchased by mail order.

With prescription drug costs on the rise, DoD is seeking ways to control spending in the TRICARE program. Since it does not receive a discount for drugs purchased at retail pharmacies, DoD is considering requiring all beneficiaries to purchase pharmaceuticals through mail order, putting military personnel and their families at a disadvantage. The fact is that most TRICARE beneficiaries prefer to use their local pharmacist who can answer questions about the medications and their correct usage.

"Military personnel and their families rely on TRICARE for their health coverage. The conferees should adopt this important provision, which will guarantee access to affordable prescription drugs whether purchased at the pharmacy or through mail-order, as Congress intended," said Rep. Scott. "Members of the military should not be at more of a disadvantage than others in our society who choose where and how to purchase their prescription medications," Rep. Scott added.

The Senate-passed provision endorsed in the letter to conferees would force pharmaceutical companies to extend discounts to the TRICARE retail program as well as the mail order program.

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