

Mineola, NY – On Tuesday, Reps. Steve Israel (D- Huntington) and Carolyn McCarthy (D-Mineola), joined Long Island seniors, veterans and the representatives from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the Family and Children’s Association, to demonstrate how new legislation could lower drug prices for seniors. Facing a veto from President Bush, McCarthy and Israel discussed the House legislation they sponsored that would lower drug costs for seniors by requiring the government to negotiate with drug companies for lower drug prices for Medicare beneficiaries.

“Neither seniors nor taxpayers can afford to pay any more than necessary for prescription drugs,” said Israel. “If the states, Fortune 500 companies, large pharmacy chains and the Veterans Administration all use bargaining clout to leverage lower drug prices for the patients they represent, the federal government should be able to do the same for seniors.”

“It is time for the Medicare drug program to work harder for its beneficiaries.” said McCarthy. “I have spoken to a number of seniors in my district whose prescription drug prices increased in 2007. The current system is not working, and is placing unnecessary financial burden on Long Island’s seniors. It is time to put the interests of seniors first.”

The Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation (H.R. 4), which was passed by the House of Representatives with bipartisan support on January 12, 2007 by a vote of 255 - 170, requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to leverage the bulk purchasing power of 43 million Medicare beneficiaries to achieve lower prescription drug prices. It would repeal current law that prohibits the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) from negotiating with drug companies for lower prices.

92% of Americans support giving the government negotiating authority according to a November 2006 Newsweek poll and the legislation is supported by dozens of organizations, including AARP, National Community Pharmacists Association, Association of Community Pharmacists, National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, Center for Medicare Advocacy, Medicare Rights Center, Leadership Council of Aging Organizations, Families USA, Consumers Union and the AFL-CIO.