

May 22, 2005

## Texas allows purchase of Canadian prescription drugs

AUSTIN (AP) - Texans could buy cheaper prescription drugs from Canada under a bill tentatively approved in the state House of Representatives on Sunday.

"This would provide the safety and the cost savings" for Texas consumers, said Democratic Representative Scott Hochberg who sponsored a measure that would allow the Texas State Board of Pharmacy to create a website listing approved Canadian prescription drug distributors.

Texas would join at least eight other states ignoring a federal ban on importing prescription drugs. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration opposes importing drugs, arguing officials here cannot guarantee their safety.

Many Americans already buy drugs from Canadian pharmacies because they are less expensive. Hochberg said his measure would help ensure Texans buy safe drugs. The amendment, approved with a vote of 114-17, was attached to a bill that reauthorizes the Texas State Board of Pharmacy.

It would require the pharmacy board to inspect no more than 10 Canadian pharmacies and make sure they meet FDA, Texas and Canada standards as well as safe-shipping codes. Information about those pharmacies and how to order prescription drugs would be listed on the board's website.

Individuals and Texas pharmacies could purchase only FDA-approved drugs. Only drugs that are prescribed for long-term use could be ordered, and no more than a 90-day supply could be purchased at one time. A Canadian pharmacy could not fill a first-time prescription.

Hochberg said the measure would prevent Texans trying to save hundreds of dollars on expensive drugs from being ripped off by online scammers selling bogus medicine.

"For a lot of people, it's a difficult choice: You get to either buy your medicine or buy food," Hochberg said.

Illinois, Minnesota and Missouri are among the states that have similar programs, and the Nevada legislature is considering setting up a website.

The FDA has not done anything to stop other states from creating such websites.

The Texas measure must next be approved by the state Senate and governor before becoming law.

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