

NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Douglas Signs Prescription Drug Bill into Law: VPIRG Applauds Legislature and Governor for Standing Up for Consumers

Gov. Jim Douglas ended speculation about whether he would side with consumers or the pharmaceutical industry over the weekend when he signed S.115 into law. The new law is designed to maximize the well-being of Vermonters in need of prescription care, contain health care costs, and protect the privacy of the doctor-patient relationship.

“This law will mean better health care at a more affordable price for many Vermonters,” said Paul Burns, executive director of the Vermont Public Interest Research Group.

Until now, pharmaceutical sales reps could simply purchase data that identifies the prescribing patterns of health care providers without the express consent of the providers or patients. Marketers can use these data to craft sales pitches that convince physicians to prescribe the newest and most expensive drug the company is offering.

The new law establishes a data-sharing program that allows prescribers to choose whether marketers have access to their individual prescribing data. If the prescriber opts in to the program, the reps are still required to provide information that details the benefits and risks of both their drugs and the drugs of other companies.

“Under this new law, pharmaceutical sales reps must share objective, evidence-based information on pharmaceutical drugs and their pricing with health care providers, which will help doctors to make safe and cost-effective decisions for their patients,” said Burns.

“This law is the right prescription for patients and their doctors in Vermont,” Burns added. “We congratulate legislators and the Attorney General for working together on the details of the legislation, and Gov. Douglas for signing it into law.”