

On the Record: The Real Reason for High Priced Drugs - Big Pharma

Members of Congress and the White House are speaking out against the true reason that Americans pay so much for their drugs: Big Pharma. Here's what key representatives are saying about Big Pharma's responsibility for high drug prices:

[The White House](#), responding to Merck's lawsuit against HHS challenging Medicare negotiation:

"Year after year, pharmaceutical giants record profits as they charge middle class families' astronomical prices – often for drugs invented generations ago. Big Pharma regularly forces Americans to pay many times what they do customers in other countries for the exact medicines. For decades, the pharma lobby has blocked efforts to let Medicare negotiate lower drug costs."

[Representative Robert Garcia \(D-CA\)](#)

"The biggest obstacle to fair pricing is Big Pharma, period. ...They wield the most power in this market. ... I would love to have a hearing with the heads of all Big Pharma to be able to ask them the questions as to why they're price gouging the average American. ... in a five-year period between 2016 and 2020, pharmaceutical companies raise their prices on drugs 36%, almost four times the rate of inflation during that same period."

[Senator John Cornyn \(R-TX\)](#)

"[It] seems to me that this whole area is rife with gamesmanship. We've even had examples of drugs that have had as many as 100 different patents - so-called patent thickets, and product hopping, and other games being shipped by the industry to maximize price. I don't begrudge the industry making a return on their investment, and I know it's highly risky, but I do object to the gamesmanship and the playing a rigged system."

[Representative Debbie Dingell \(D-MI\)](#), in response to Merck's lawsuit:

"I call it extortion when [Big Pharma] increase the cost of drugs more than inflation, to seniors who have no choice — not only seniors, but to patients across this country that have no other choice. I call it extortion when there's a shortage of drugs in this country, and with that chemotherapy patients in Michigan and across this country who are having their appointments canceled, because there's a shortage of drugs."

[Representative Jamie Raskin \(D-MD\)](#)

"...Drug companies are ultimately responsible for setting high prices, and in fact have poured millions of dollars into TV and social media ads as well as lobbying to deflect attention away from their own role in setting high drug prices, by shining the spotlight on the PBMs."

[Representative Frank Pallone \(D-NJ\)](#)

"[Merck's] lawsuit is outrageous. Empowering Medicare to negotiate fair prescription drug prices for seniors is not only plainly constitutional, but it's also necessary if life-saving drugs are to continue to be available to all Americans. People just can't afford their medications and increasingly go without them. The only rights that are being violated here are those of the American people who have been getting ripped off by Big Pharma companies like Merck for years."

[Representative Mike Garcia \(R-CA\)](#)

"The biggest obstacle to fair pricing is Big Pharma."

[Representative Shontel Brown \(D-OH\)](#)

"It is staggering that last year alone, Pharma spent \$8.1B on advertising while millions of Americans still can't afford their medications."

[Senator Mike Braun \(R-IN\)](#)

"You're breaking the bank. The thing you have to realize is that all the things that you say are attributes of our system shouldn't cost us 50 percent more than what health care does across the world. In your case - since most people have a prescription as maybe their first entry into the health care system - you're charging minimally four times as much here, if not 10 times."

[Senator Patty Murray \(D-WA\)](#)

"Merck is doing everything it can to protect its profits at the expense of patients who need their prescriptions to stay healthy and get treatment for everything from cancer to diabetes. While big drug companies may not want to be at the negotiating table, the American people are sick and tired of giant pharmaceutical corporations putting their executives' paychecks above patients—and Democrats will keep fighting back to put patients over profits at every turn."

[Representative Summer Lee \(D-PA\)](#)

"This committee's three-year investigation into drug companies discovered many ways that pharmaceutical companies prioritize profits over people, including flagrant anti-competitive behavior to maintain their monopoly pricing."

[Senator Sheldon Whitehouse \(D-RI\)](#)

"PBMs are perhaps the most powerful institutional counterweight to the pharmaceutical industry. ... [Big Pharma has done] marvelous political jujitsu to turn concern about its pricing into critiques of PBMs, who are perhaps their greatest institutional adversary and one of the most powerful forces for pushing [the pharmaceutical industry's] prices down."