



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

HARDY MYERS

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ATTORNEY GENERAL HARDY MYERS ANNOUNCES \$4 MILLION GRANT TO CONSUMERS UNION FROM WARNER LAMBERT SETTLEMENT

Oregon will administer CU grant to give consumers free and unbiased information about buying prescriptions in the drug market.

Attorney General Hardy Myers today announced a grant of more than \$4 million to Consumers Union (CU) that will ultimately help consumers make the safest and most effective prescription drug choices.

“The multi-million dollar grant will give CU, the nonprofit publisher of Consumer Reports, the assistance needed to provide consumers with free and unbiased information when sorting through the confusing prescription drug market,” Myers explained. In addition to being a member of the Special Committee of Attorneys General that made the grant, the Oregon Department of Justice will act as Grant Administrator.

“Many consumers find themselves confused and helpless when it comes to comparison shopping for prescription drugs,” Myers said. “Consumers need objective information to help them make choices based on science and evidence rather than marketing and promotion”

The grant is available as part of a \$38 million dollar consumer protection settlement between the Attorneys General of 50 states and Warner-Lambert, now owned by Pfizer, the world’s largest pharmaceutical company. The settlement was part of a larger May 2004 agreement by which Warner-Lambert paid \$430 million to resolve allegations that it illegally marketed its drug Neurontin[®] for “off-label”

purposes not approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The Attorneys' General settlement earmarked funds for consumer education and advertising, with a large portion set aside for grants that will give consumers balanced information when making the important decision about what drug is the safest and most effective.

Myers, a member of the Special Committee that decides who receives the grants, also serves as the grant contractor and holds all settlement funds in trust for the other states.

Today's grant benefits CU's public education project, Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs™ (www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org), a program with a website that provides prescription drug comparisons ranging from affordability to effectiveness. "Millions of consumers either go without needed medications or pay high prices for their prescriptions because they don't know about effective, affordable alternatives," said Jim Guest, president of CU. "The Attorneys' General grant, by informing consumers about their choices when it comes to prescription medications, will help counter pervasive drug industry marketing that drives up health care costs."

Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs™ provides information about prescription drugs used to treat 35 major medical illnesses and conditions, including high cholesterol, high blood pressure, depression, insomnia, and diabetes. This information is a result of systematic reviews by the Drug Effectiveness Review Project based at the Oregon Health and Science University. Pilot outreach projects in six states have worked with local non-profits and medical professionals to distribute print materials and increase awareness of the free website. The material is also available through links from other sites such as www.medlineplus.gov.

The Attorneys' General grant awarded today to CU will also expand the free drug safety information by reaching out to organizations across the country and providing information at <http://www.consumerreports.org/health/prescription-drugs.htm> to reach seniors, low-income, minority and other target audiences with

balanced information that can help improve health quality and lower prescription drug costs. For example, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, through its 650 Area Agencies, will bring this unbiased information to the senior communities across the country. The grant also will create educational campaigns about prescription drug choices that are targeted at low-income and Spanish-speaking consumers.

“Seniors and Spanish-speaking residents of our state are most in need when it comes to receiving complete and neutral information about prescription drug choices,” Myers said. “We believe CU has the right approach to effectively reach these members of our communities.”

More information about CU is online at www.consumersunion.org. Those wanting information on consumer protection in Oregon may call the Attorney General’s consumer hotline at (503) 378-4320 (Salem area only), (503) 229-5576 (Portland area only) or toll-free at 1-877-877-9392. DOJ is online at www.doj.state.or.us.

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