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## **Consumers Union Awarded \$4.4 Million Grant To Expand Prescription Drug Awareness Program**

*New Initiative Will Target Seniors, Minorities, Uninsured, and Spanish-Speaking Consumers With Free, Unbiased Drug Information*

(Washington, D.C.) – Today Attorneys General from around the country announced ([www.doj.state.or.us](http://www.doj.state.or.us)) a \$4.4 million grant to Consumers Union that will fund a public education program designed to eliminate huge gaps in public knowledge about prescription drugs. With close to \$10 billion dollars spent on drug advertising each year, the airwaves are saturated with drug promotions that often provide incomplete and inadequate information about drug choices.

Today's grant announcement gives Consumers Union, the nonprofit publisher of *Consumer Reports*, the assistance to expand its current public education campaign to reach new audiences with free and unbiased prescription drug information. "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 Consumers Union. "The AG Grant will help counter pervasive drug industry marketing that drives up health care costs by informing consumers about their choices when it comes to prescription medications."

The grant money 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. In 2004, Warner-Lambert agreed to pay \$430 million to resolve allegations that it illegally marketed its drug, Neurontin®, for "off-label" purposes not approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

"Consumers Union is deeply honored to be selected by the AG Committee to educate consumers about their drug choices," said Gail Shearer, Director of Health Policy Analysis for Consumers Union. According to Shearer, the grant will enable CU to leverage the success of its *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs™* campaign, which aims to level the prescription drug "playing field" for consumers by comparing drugs based on effectiveness, safety, and price. *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs™* ([www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org](http://www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org)) has so far examined prescription drugs used to treat 35 major medical illnesses and conditions, including high cholesterol, high blood pressure, depression, insomnia, and diabetes.

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“The AG grant means that we can reach populations where the need is greatest, with the ultimate goal of improving overall health outcomes and value through better drug choices,” added Shearer. Target populations include people with large out-of-pocket drug expenditures, such as seniors and the uninsured; people who use multiple drugs; and low-income minorities. CU will use several avenues to disseminate this information, available for free online at [www.ConsumerReportsHealth.org](http://www.ConsumerReportsHealth.org). For example, the National Association of Agencies for the Aging, through its 650 Area Agencies, will bring CU’s unbiased information to senior communities across the country.

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Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs™ combines a review of the scientific evidence on the effectiveness and safety of medicines with pricing information. Every report is peer-reviewed by medical experts. The project is independently administered by Consumers Union and Consumer Reports with support from the Engelberg Foundation, a private philanthropy, and the National Library of Medicine.