



## Vermont sets strong example on drug prices

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“Vermont is poised to become the first state requiring drug companies to explain their price increases,” Dave Gram noted in last Sunday’s Daily News. “The Vermont bill calls on state health care regulators to develop an annual list of up to 15 drugs that have seen the biggest price increases. Their manufacturers would then have to justify the increases to the attorney general’s office.”

Gram goes on to point out that Harvoni, the drug shown to completely cure hepatitis C in many patients, lists for \$1,125 per pill – or \$94,500 for the recommended three-month regimen. Yet, it only costs Gilead Sciences, the pharmaceutical company responsible for Harvoni, about \$1,400 to produce the entire 12-week treatment.

As I have indicated on several occasions, I am not opposed to free enterprise. I believe capitalism, in large measure, contributed to the prosperity this nation has experienced for much of its existence. At the same time, not all Americans have benefited from the immense wealth accumulated by a relatively few under this economic rubric.

Any system, regardless of how effective or efficient it is at accomplishing its intended purpose, needs oversight. The end does not unilaterally justify the means. Whereas hard work and initiative should obviously be rewarded, there should be reasonable limits to the remuneration you are entitled to, regardless of how much you might think you deserve.

I put health care in a different category than most “goods and services.” It has long been my contention everyone should have access to life-sustaining medications, regardless of their employment status or net worth. As such, I am vehemently opposed to withholding any prescription for purely financial reasons from those who desperately need it.

So I applaud legislators in Vermont for drawing a much-needed line in the sand. I hope other states quickly follow suit.

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