



**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

June 6, 2006

BILL NELSON  
FLORIDA

The Honorable Susan M. Collins  
Chairman  
Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee  
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joseph Lieberman  
Ranking Member  
Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee  
601 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Collins and Lieberman:

I am writing to request that the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs launch an investigation into the seizure by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) of prescription drugs purchased by Americans from Canada. I have serious concerns with the recent surge in such seizures that I believe warrant the Committee's attention.

I realize that the importation of prescription drugs is illegal under most circumstances. However, after years of not enforcing this statute in cases of personal use, it appears as though CBP is taking unprecedented steps to crack down on seniors who are buying their prescriptions from Canada in order to afford them.

Without adequately informing the Congress or the public, on November 17, 2006, CBP implemented a new stricter policy on prescription drug importation. This new policy was quietly implemented until hundreds of complaints from constituents across the country, press reports, and actions by members of Congress, uncovered the shift in policy. In April, my office was able to uncover that the new policy resulted in over 13,000 prescription drug shipments being detained by CBP officials.

The general public was not alerted to CBP's change in policy. As a result, thousands of Americans who ordered life-sustaining medications were caught unaware, and their drugs never arrived. I am concerned that this unwise policy is continuing without clear guidance for the general public, endangering those who rely on prescription medications from abroad.

As evidence of the continuation of this policy, my office was recently informed that on April 24, 2006, a shipment of prescription drugs was put in the mail for one of my constituents. Her shipment of Lopressor, the low-cost prescription drug she purchased, was detained at the U.S. border. Lopressor is a type of medication used in the treatment of high blood pressure, chest

pain, and heart attacks. If the drug is taken for high blood pressure, the medication must be taken regularly; if a dose is missed the patient's condition may worsen.

In another instance, on May 25, 2006, a shipment of Lipitor was put in the mail for another one of my constituents. Her shipment of Lipitor, the prescription drug she purchased, was also detained at the U.S. border. Lipitor is used to reduce the amounts cholesterol and triglycerides in your blood. The drug helps to reduce the risk of hardening of the arteries, which can lead to heart attacks, stroke, and vascular disease.

Instead of receiving their essential medications my constituents received a notice from CBP indicating that they had been interdicted, as well as a threatening notice that warns of the supposed dangers associated with importations of prescription drugs. Their health was clearly jeopardized by CBP's activities, and I believe these actions are dangerous and irresponsible. I have attached the notices they received from CBP and additional background information on the cases for your review.

These continuing actions raise questions about the scope, purpose, and wisdom of CBP's new policy. Therefore, I am requesting that the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs launch an investigation to determine the reasons for the change in policy, how any changes will be applied over time, and the impact on Americans who rely on lower-priced prescription drugs from Canada in order to afford them.

Thank you for your attention to this request and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.