



Bad Medicine: Americans Frustrated With High Drug Prices

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In these hyper-partisan times, there aren't many issues with bipartisan agreement, but one of them is prescription drug prices. A large majority of Americans believe drug prices are too high, and they have reason to. A recent study shows drug costs rising at more than twice the inflation rate. As for the solution, most Americans agree on that too. A new survey from the Kaiser Family Foundation finds 83 percent support allowing the government to negotiate for lower drug prices.

Negotiating for lower prescription drug prices is popular because both parties have touted it. Former President Donald Trump advocated for it while he was in office, and Democrats have included it in their massive "Build Back Better" spending bill now stalled on Capitol Hill. But it may only be attractive in theory. "The reason drug prices are so high is because Congress always loses those negotiations...Congress is a terrible price negotiator," says Michael Cannon, Director of Health Policy at the CATO Institute. "And the reason for that is Congress is a political body."

Cannon tells KTRH that with politicians being beholden to votes and money, Big Pharma is able to dominate these price negotiations. "In these debates, it's always the pharmaceutical companies that have the loudest voice, because they have the biggest stake," he says. "When you let the political system make these decisions about what healthcare people should get and how much the prices should be, the people with the biggest stake end up carrying the day, even though they are a minority of the population."

While advocating for government negotiation sounds good to most people, Cannon argues a real solution to drug prices is getting government out of the equation. "So that only the private sector is making those decisions, so that prices actually reflect what seniors and other patients want, rather than what the drug company lobbyists want," he says.