

# The Times Record

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## EDITORIAL

### Maine Rx lives!

The ground-breaking Maine Rx program can begin! So ruled the U.S. Supreme Court on Monday.

Maine Rx became law in 2000 to provide access to lower-cost prescription drugs for people not eligible for Medicaid (Healthy Maine program). The state may now use its Medicaid program to negotiate discount drug prices for Mainers who do not have prescription drug coverage. An estimated 325,000 Mainers could benefit.

The plaintiffs, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, again failed to show why Maine Rx should not be allowed to take effect. On hold for three long years of litigation, as Maine Rx gets rolling, it is sure to be emulated by many other states. Better than that would be action in Congress.

Sen. Olympia Snowe has co-authored a "tripartisan" prescription drug plan. Praising Monday's court ruling on Maine Rx, she said, "As a leading advocate in the Senate, I believe passing universal prescription drug coverage for all Medicare beneficiaries is perhaps the single most important step we can take to meet the needs of seniors and other Ameri-

cans." The Finance Committee is expected to take up such legislation early next month.

Sen. Susan Collins also supports Maine Rx and has worked to make prescription drugs more affordable for all.

Rep. Tom Allen made his mark as a freshman by pushing for lower prescription drug costs for the elderly. In 1998, he commissioned the first of several studies that documented pharmaceutical company price discrimination. He's introduced several bills on this issue along the way and is now co-sponsoring Rep. Michael Michaud's bill — The America Rx Act of 2003, HR 1694, which is based on the Maine Rx program.

"It assures that any American, regardless of income, who lacks public or private outpatient prescription drug coverage, is eligible for rebates comparable to those given under Medicaid," according to a press release from both representatives.

As the leader of the free world, it certainly is not beyond this country's ability to ensure its citizens have access to something as basic as affordable prescription medicine. Maine's state and national lawmakers are leading the way.