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# Engaging Consumers On Health Care Cost and Value Issues

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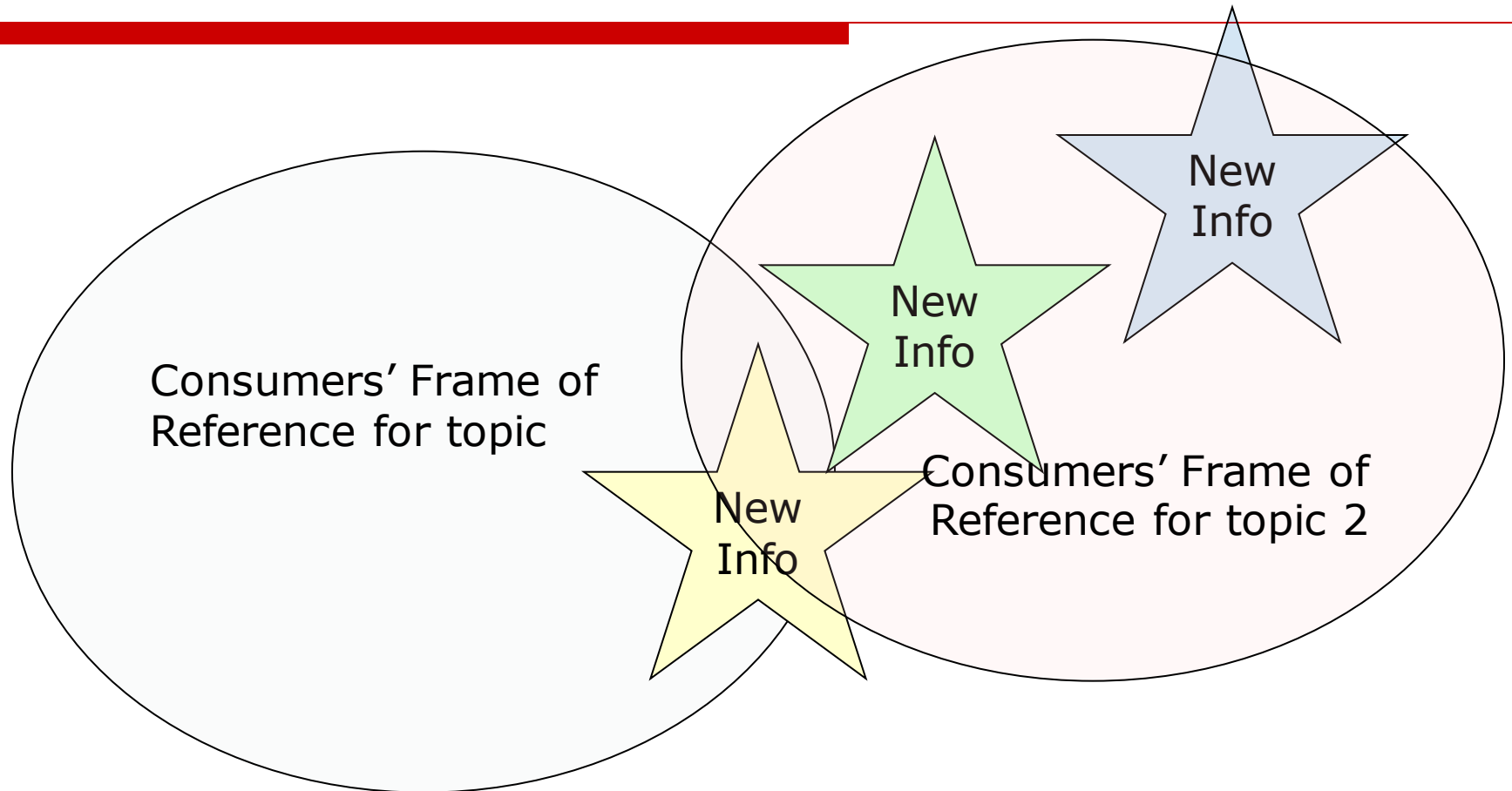
# Our premise

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- ❑ Consumer support is fundamental for policymakers and regulator action.
- ❑ Low public awareness of system problems and potential solutions hinders progress on health care cost/value issues.
- ❑ Efforts to increase public awareness are hampered by our incomplete understanding of consumers' attitudes towards health system problems.

# Why is it important to know consumers' attitudes?

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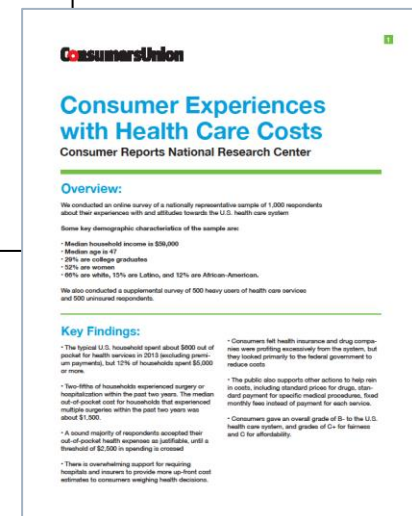
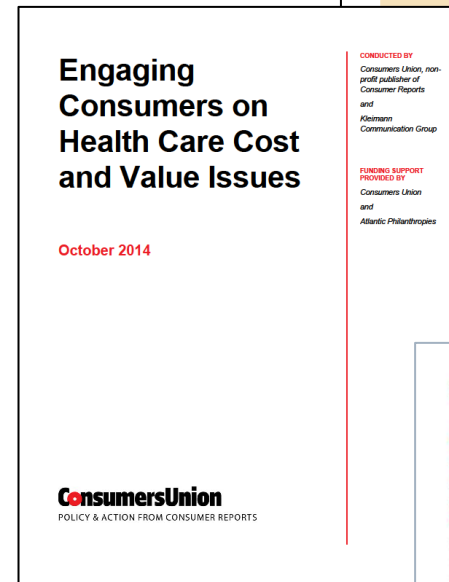
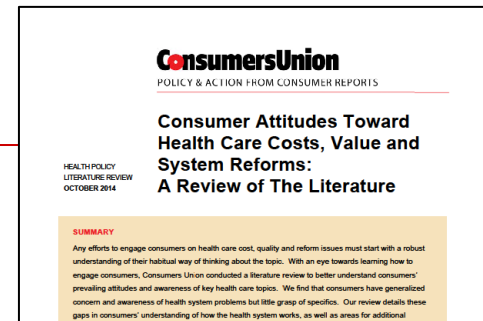


# A Mixed Methods Research Project

□ Literature Review

□ Focus Groups

□ Nationally Representative Survey



# High Costs Are Front-of-Mind For Consumers

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**Q.** What is one word that describes the US health care system?

**A.** “Expensive,” “Money,” “High costs” or a variation

*“If you take the ‘U’ and the ‘S’ part of the health care system and put them together or overlap one of them—one over the top of the other, you get a dollar sign,” (CO-Group 1)*

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# Consumers think about health costs on two levels

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- Usually health costs=costs they pay out of pocket.
  - They have system-wide costs in mind when thinking about reforms, including the portion paid by third parties.
  - But consumers have only a general sense of how broader system costs get paid.
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# Consumers are angry about costs

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“arbitrary”

“greed”

“not fair”

“it’s a moral issue”

“gougers”

# Quality problems are not top-of-mind

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- ❑ Think about high quality health care in terms of their own doctor and office staff.
  - ❑ Focus on the “softer” side of a practice: communication style of staff, careful attention to medical details and wait time.
  - ❑ Mostly unaware of measures such as hospital infection rates, adherence to evidenced-based protocols, HEDIS, CAHPS or any common metrics that a policymaker or accreditation body might use.
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# Health system quality rated more highly than affordability

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**Q.** What grade would you give the health system for...

| Topic               | Grade |
|---------------------|-------|
| ...quality of care? | B     |
| ...fairness?        | C+    |
| ...affordability?   | C     |

*Source: Consumers Union 2014 Nationally Representative Survey*

# What Motivates Consumers To Act?

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- An emotional response to information
- But information must:
  - Be from a trusted source
  - Evoke an emotional response – can't be “logical”
  - Conform to their current beliefs and perceptions or “anchored” to other information they know. Local information is particularly motivating.
- And you must give them something to do!

# Visual Information Particularly Motivating

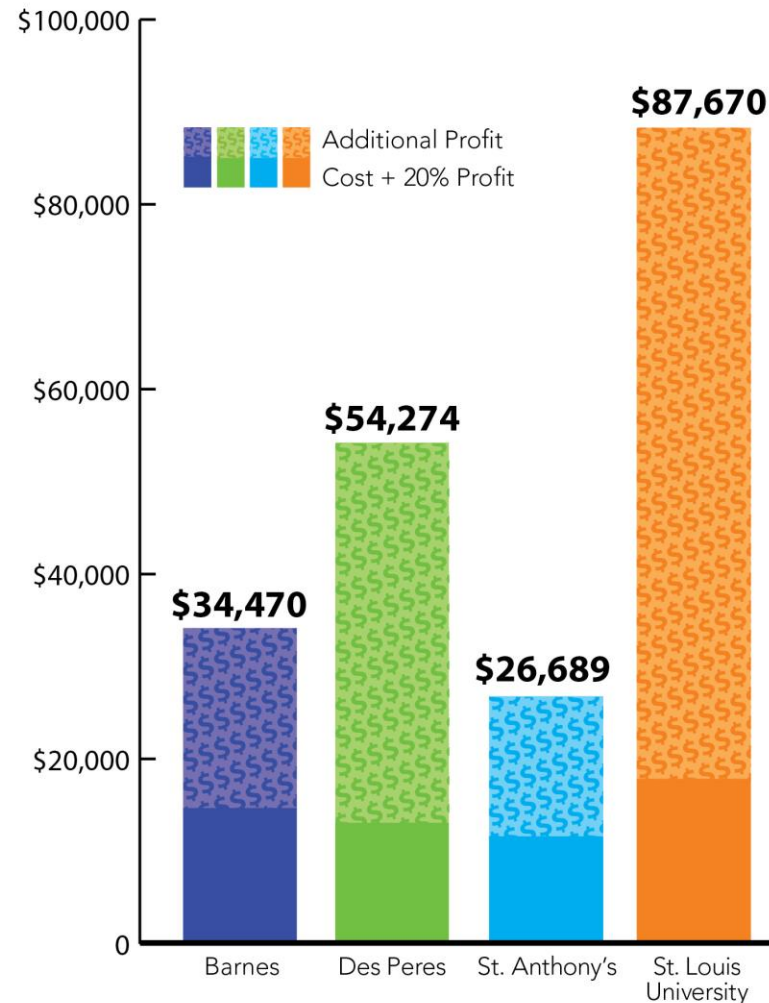
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Infographics combine data and visuals in a way that reveals relationships and significance more quickly than verbal or text information

## Same City, Same Service: How Much Price Variation is Reasonable?

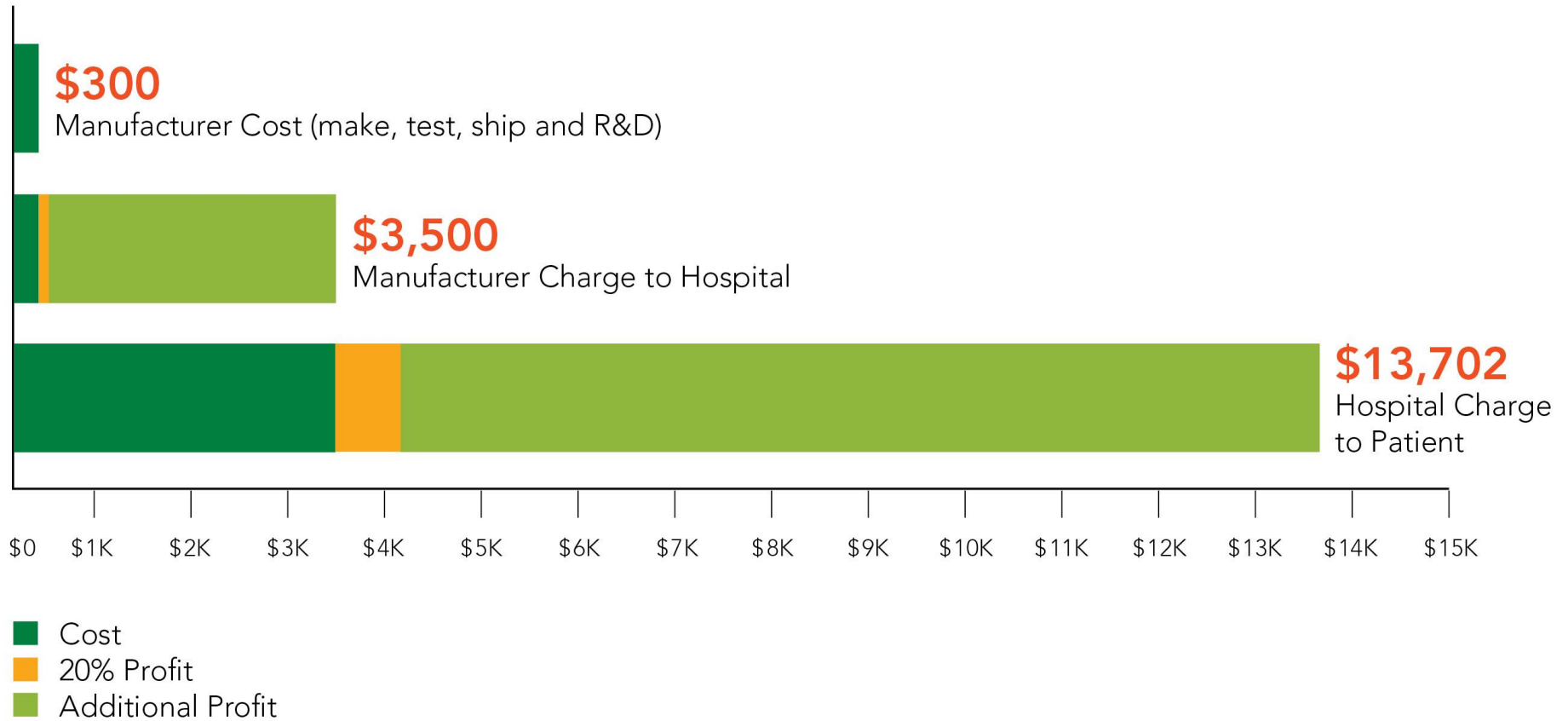
- ❑ Highly motivating!
- ❑ Local data on hospitals allowed participants to layer on their own information
- ❑ Highlighting hospital markup = emotional response
- ❑ Participants views: hospitals are a business and should make some profit but health care is a social good, so not too much!

St. Louis Hospitals: Inpatient Joint Replacement



# Is the Cost Reasonable?

## One Dose of Cancer Drug Rituxan



# What are consumers willing to do?

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- Want to be told what to do, not have to research it themselves
  - Willing to take:
    - Personal actions (informed shopping, healthy lifestyle)
    - System-directed actions (write to legislator)
  - But want to be effective - how can we band together to amplify our voice?
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# What system level interventions would consumers support?

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A broad range, including:

- price caps,
- provider payment reform (various),
- global budgets,
- disclosure of “fair” prices, and
- mandatory upfront cost estimates.

They like **penalties** for poor performing providers better than **rewards** for good providers.

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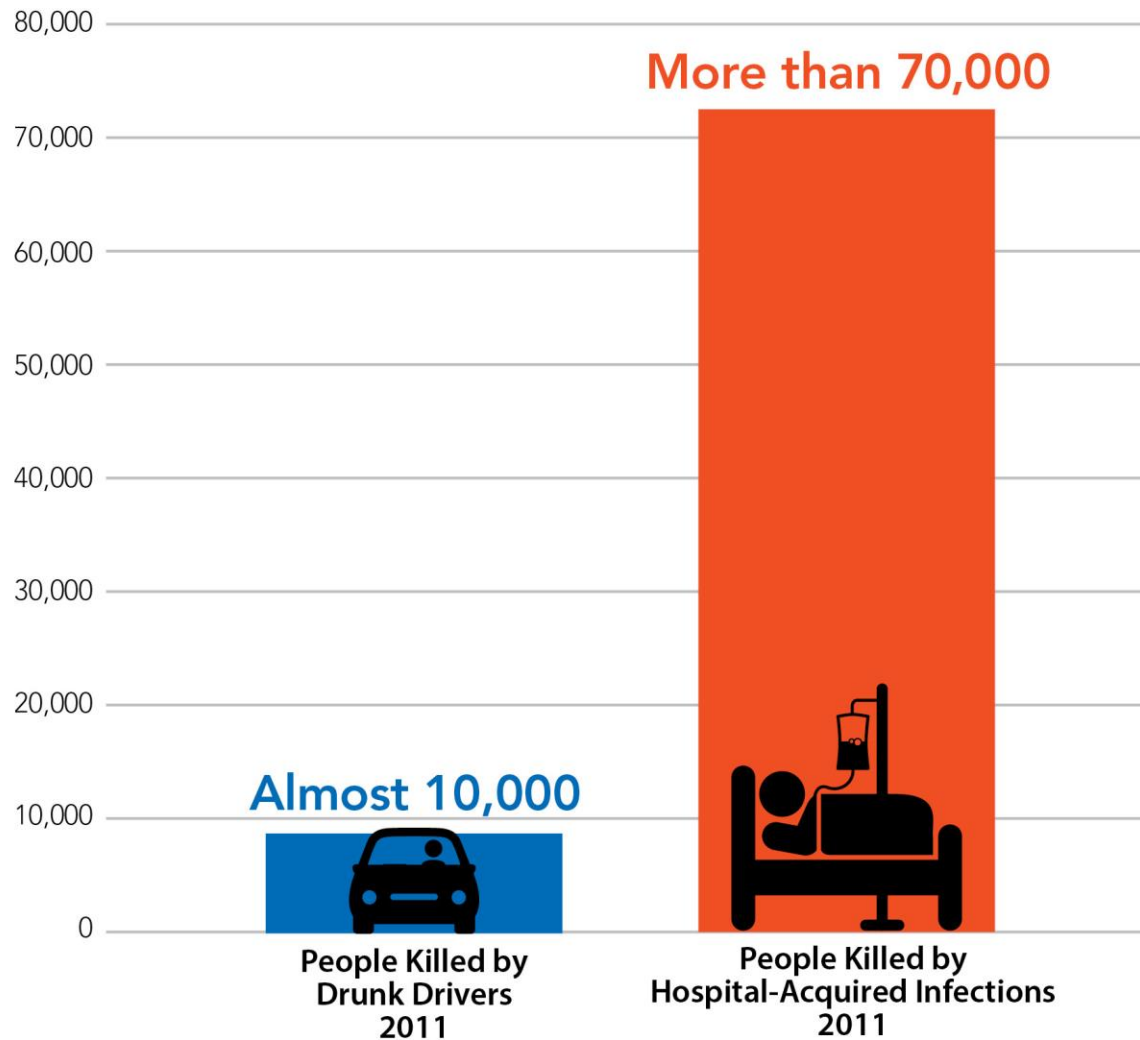
# Muted reaction to certain solutions: EHR and better coordinated care

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- While EHR and coordinated care viewed favorably, improvements seemed logical → little emotional response → not tempted to act.
  - **Exception:** hospital infections
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# Hospitals Can Be Dangerous



Every year in the U.S., drunk drivers kill almost **10,000** people, but hospital-acquired infections kill **over seven times** that many.

The CDC estimates these infections add **\$45 billion** every year to hospital costs.

# Bottom line: Consumers highly motivated to act

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- Easily motivated to “do something” about excessively high costs and high rates of hospital infections
  - Harder but possible to get support for specific reforms. Try:
    - Follow rules for motivating information, connect to system problems and leverage desire to “do something”
    - Avoid short list of reforms that don’t resonate (like rewarding good doctors)
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# Medical Delivery Reforms

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- Make the impact on the consumers explicit and personal, rather than discussing the reform in an abstract way.
- EXAMPLE: talk about the number of duplicate prescriptions or tests that can occur and possible patient harm.

# Going forward

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- ❑ We have consumers' permission to do this.
- ❑ Advocates' job: channel consumers' frustration – give them something to do.
- ❑ The ideal? A collective campaign to educate and activate the public.

# Thank You!

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**[www.ConsumersUnion.org/  
Engaging-Consumers-On-Value](http://www.ConsumersUnion.org/Engaging-Consumers-On-Value)**

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## Engaging Consumers on Health Care Cost and Value Issues

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**ConsumersUnion**  
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