distributors, and manufacturers of prescription drugs.

I want to be clear on an important point: importing prescription drugs from other countries will not solve the problem of rising drug prices. Our market for prescription drugs is so large that we can not import enough lower-priced medications from other countries to make a significant impact on prices here.

There are many other ways that Congress is helping Americans afford their prescription medications. Just yesterday, for instance, the new Medicare drug discount cards went into effect. The cards offer savings of 10 to 25 percent or more off the current retail prices seniors pay, and seniors with low incomes also qualify for a $1,200 credit over the next 18 months to help pay for prescriptions.

Nevertheless, millions of Americans are still buying prescription drugs in Canada and other countries, or purchasing drugs from Internet pharmacies that operate outside the United States. Despite the fact that importing prescription drugs is against the law today, these Americans are taking their lives in their hands by going outside our closed drug distribution system and obtaining their prescription medicines from pharmacies and Internet sites that do not meet the high standards that we require domestically.

Right now, the Federal Government and State governments are looking the other way, crossing our fingers and hoping that no one gets hurt. So I am cosponsoring Senator GREGG's bill to put a strong and enforceable system in place to protect Americans against the dangers inherent in importing drugs from other countries. I also intend to work with Senator GREGG to oppose any election-year political maneuvering that would weaken the critical safety components of his legislation as we consider the bill in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and on the Senate floor.

ENACTMENT OF THE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION ADVANCEMENT ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased that the House of Representatives has now passed the Standards Development Organization Advancement Act, an important piece of legislation on which both parties and both Chambers have been able to reach accord. It is now on its way to the President's desk, and I am confident that he will sign it into law.

In April of this year, Senator HATCH, Senator KOHL, Senator DEWINE, and I worked to craft a bipartisan, fair version of this bill that will promote the development of technical standards while preserving antitrust laws that enhance competition. It has been rare during this Congress to achieve the type of consensus generated by our bill, and it illustrates what we can accomplish when both parties work together. This is an example of how Congress should function. I must also express my gratitude to Chairman SENSENBRENNER for all his efforts in the House of Representatives, not only for his critical role in shaping this legislation but also for the expeditious way he shepherded the bill through the House.

As I have noted many times, technical standards serve a vital if unseen role in allowing for interoperability of products and making sure that the goods we buy are safe and effective. Whether for airbags or for fire retardant materials, without technical standards, consumers would be less likely to make the purchases that fuel the engine of the U.S. economy. Even more important, aspects of our lives that we consider routine—perhaps even mundane—would take on added dangers without standards that allow consumers to feel confident that a given product is safe and reliable.

There is, however, an unavoidable tension between the antitrust laws that prohibit businesses from colluding and the development of technical standards, which require competitors to reach agreement on basic design elements. The Standards Development Organization Advancement Act eases this tension, allowing standards development organizations to continue their important work while preserving our antitrust laws that enhance competition and protect American consumers.

Without creating an antitrust exemption, the Standards Development Organization Advancement Act will allow standards development organizations to seek review of their standards by the Department of Justice or the Federal Trade Commission prior to implementation. This ''screening'' phase will not let a standards development organization escape penalty for a regulation that a court later rules is in violation of antitrust laws, but it will limit the organization's liability to single damages rather than the treble damages levied under current law.

Additionally, the bill amends the National Cooperative Research and Production Act of 1993, by directing courts to apply a ''rule of reason'' standard to standards development organizations and the guidelines they produce. Under existing law, standards may be deemed anticompetitive by a court even if they have the effect of better serving consumers. This legislation gives our courts the needed ability to balance the competing interests of safety and efficiency against any anticompetitive effect—it is a capability our courts need in order to fairly administer justice. Back in the 103rd Congress, I introduced the Senate version of the National Cooperative Production Amendments Act of 1993, and I am glad that we can today build on our earlier successes.

Title II of the Standards Development Organization Advancement Act also addresses several areas of our antitrust laws that merit updating, as our experience with the actual practice in the world has shown. Most importantly, it will eliminate the disparity between the treatment of criminal white collar offenses and antitrust criminal violations—a provision Senator HATCH and I had introduced in S. 1080, the Antitrust Improvements Act of 2003—and it will update and improve the Justice Department's amnesty program in the criminal antitrust context. It will also make some practical adjustments to the language of the Tunney Act. Finally, it will allow a judge to order publication of the comments received in a Tunney Act proceeding by electronic or other means. This provision will make these documents more accessible to the public while saving taxpayers the costs of paper publication.

I am glad that we can send to the President this bill that makes so many useful, fair, and bipartisan changes.

AMERICA'S FARMERS AND OBESITY

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, over the past 2 weeks, more than 2,000 farmers—including over 600 from Kansas, the most from any State—have signed a petition that will be sent to ABC News and TIME magazine today or tomorrow. The signers of this petition are to be commended.

Their request is simple. They want to ensure that their voices are heard in an upcoming summit on obesity sponsored by the two news outlets. At this summit, and in subsequent media coverage, ''experts'' will attempt to link Federal support for America's farmers to the country's obesity epidemic.

The individuals who signed the petition are frustrated, and rightfully so. This summit is a follow-up to the December news special, ''How to Get Fat Without Really Trying,'' where ABC dedicated more than 15 minutes of airtime to bash Federal support for farmers.

Unfortunately, no one from the agricultural community was afforded the opportunity to defend farming families or the policies on which they depend. And don't expect too many farmers to be on hand to defend themselves at the upcoming summit either, not with a $2,000 registration fee.

The agriculture community is not alone in its frustration. I am frustrated, too. So are many of my colleagues, like Senators BURNS and LINCOLN, who have also been vocal in their opposition to those who would blame farmers for America's bulging waistlines.

In the December special, Peter Jennings claimed ''not many people in the government have made the connection between subsidies to agriculture and obesity.'' At least ABC got one thing right. We haven't made that connection, because there is no connection to be made.

Consider this: federal farm support has been in place since the 1930s. Yet,