

# Reimportation of drugs supported

By **KEN ROSS**

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WEST SPRINGFIELD - Former Springfield Mayor Michael J. Albano and others yesterday denounced a recent report critical of reimporting drugs from Canada, calling the report "bogus" and "irresponsible."

"We need lower prices for prescription medications," Albano said. "No one wants to go to Canada. We want to support local pharmacies. But the prices are so much lower."

Isaac BenEzra, president of the Massachusetts Senior Action Council, agreed.

"It is not the solution, but it is an immediate fix for people who need drugs now," he said.

BenEzra and Albano made their comments during a press



Isaac BenEzra



Michael J. Albano

conference at the West Springfield Council on Aging organized by the Action Council, a nonprofit organization which supports drug reimportation and other efforts to lower health-care costs.

The press conference was directed at a report released Sept. 22 by Suffolk University's Beacon Hill Institute and the conser-

vative Institute for Policy Innovation.

According to the report, allowing reimportation of low-cost drugs would cost Massachusetts 3,957 jobs and \$246.9 million in lost economic activity by 2010.

Such figures are "based on several things that are just not true," said John W. Bennett, president of the Springfield chapter of the Massachusetts Senior Action Council. Bennett said the study does not factor in federal subsidies for medical research, and fails to mention that drug companies spend two to three times as much on marketing as on research.

"If you start with false assumptions, you get false conclusions," Bennett said.

BenEzra called the report "bo-

gus" and filled with "false, irresponsible statements."

Carol J. Stefanik, 59, of West Springfield and Sebastian J. Tarallo, 70, of Longmeadow attended the press conference and spoke in support of drug reimportation, something both of them have done.

"There's no reason why the American public should have to subsidize prices in Canada and around the world," Tarallo said.

Last year, Albano called attention to high prescription drug prices when as mayor of Springfield he created a program allowing municipal employees, retirees and their families to buy drugs from Canada. More than 3,000 signed up for the voluntary program, the first of its kind in the nation. Other cities have since adopted similar programs.