

House Overwhelmingly Votes in Favor of Legislation that Would Help Millions Cope with Chronic Pain

National Pain Care Bill calls for Increased Research, Education and Awareness of Pain Management Issues

WASHINGTON – March 30, 2009 – The House of Representatives passed a critical piece of bipartisan legislation today that would address the barriers and stigmas associated with pain management and will ultimately bring relief to millions of Americans who suffer from chronic pain everyday. The National Pain Care Policy Act of 2009 (H.R. 756) would bolster pain care research and improve medical provider and public awareness of pain care issues.

More than 76.2 million Americans suffer from chronic pain - more than cancer, diabetes and heart disease combined - according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Pain is the most common reason Americans access the health care system and a driving contributor to soaring health care costs, accounting for more than \$100 billion a year in expenses and lost productivity.

“Cancer patients are acutely familiar with the burden of unmanaged pain and tragically too often suffer, despite the availability of a variety of medication and therapies,” said Daniel E. Smith, president of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). “This legislation will promote a collaborative approach to proper pain management by educating health care practitioners, policymakers and patients about new policies and available options for accessible, affordable and effective pain care.”

Key components of the bill include:

- The authorization of an Institute of Medicine Conference on Pain Care;
- Encourages the National Institutes of Health (NIH) director to aggressively expand research on the causes of and the potential treatment for pain;
- The creation of a grant program to improve health professionals’ understanding and ability to assess and appropriately treat pain; and
- The creation of a national public awareness campaign about pain management, conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services, with particular attention to improving access to appropriate pain treatment among underserved populations.

“Access to quality, affordable, unbiased health care is a fundamental right for all Americans,” said Smith. “By increasing research, education and awareness of pain issues the National Pain Care Act can help to eliminate pain care disparities based on race, age and gender that for too long have prevented millions from seeking the care they deserve.”

ACS CAN, the advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, applauds the House and specifically lead cosponsors Representatives Lois Capps (D-CA) and Mike Rogers (R-MI) for their commitment to improving the quality of life for the millions who cope with chronic pain every day. Cancer patients across the country are hopeful that the Senate will follow with the same quick and positive action.

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit www.acscan.org.

###