

# Congressman Smith's Letter

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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

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Committees:

Foreign Affairs

Africa and Global Health Subcommittee – Ranking Member

Western Hemisphere Subcommittee

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe – Ranking  
Member

Dean, New Jersey Delegation

Dear Friends,

I sincerely regret that I cannot be with you today as I have a commitment in Washington related to my responsibilities as Ranking Member of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health.

I want to offer my most heartfelt congratulations to all of you on this truly great occasion in celebration of the opening of the Lyme & Tick-Born Diseases Research Center at Columbia University. As someone who has been aggressively advocating for Lyme disease patients and Lyme disease research since the early 1990's and who in that time has met with uncounted numbers of Lyme disease patients and their families, I am so grateful that this -the first in the world endowed research center for chronic Lyme disease -is opening. I am grateful because it finally brings hope to so many chronically suffering patients -hope in the very tangible and very impressive form of a research center at one of the most

respected universities in the world and in the form of internationally-renowned and multi-disciplined scientists devoted to solving the mysteries of chronic Lyme disease.

In the first meeting I held in my office on Lyme disease in March 1992 with officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, Lyme patients, and now Lyme Disease Association President Pat Smith, I felt both saddened and challenged with how bleak the situation looked. After many years of advocacy, I hosted a meeting last year with Pat Smith and other advocates, where Dr. Brian Fallon sat across the table from CDC Director Gerberding to discuss some of his research findings regarding chronic Lyme, and I was gratified that we were indeed making progress. But today, we can all agree that it's a whole new ballgame, and I, like all of you, anxiously anticipate what the opening of this Chronic Lyme Research Center will mean for Lyme disease patients.

Let me join in offering my sincerest thanks to Pat Smith, President of the Lyme Disease Association, and to Diane Blanchard and Deb Siciliano, Co-Presidents of Time for Lyme, Inc., for the unbelievable efforts and resources they have devoted to the development and opening of this Center. Let me say that it has been my pleasure to work with Pat for over 18 years, and recently with Diane and Deb who have been kind enough on many occasions to share their knowledge about Lyme disease issues with my staff. I'd also like to recognize and thank Dr. Brian Fallon, the Director of the Research Center that we celebrate today for being an indisputable champion of unearthing scientific truths about neurologic Lyme disease. Let me also thank the often unsung heroes, the Boards of Directors for both the Lyme Disease Association and Time for Lyme, Inc., and the many others nationwide who have contributed to this great accomplishment.

Finally, let me tell you that to aid the fight against Lyme disease, I have registered in the current Congress the Lyme

Disease Caucus, which I am co-chairing with Representatives Bart Stupak of Michigan and Tim Holden of Pennsylvania. In January, I introduced HR 741, the "Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases Prevention, Education, and Research Act of 2007," which provides an increase in total research, prevention, and education funding for Lyme and other tick-borne diseases of \$20 million per year over 5 years. The bill also establishes a Tick-Borne Diseases Advisory Committee designed to be a focus of communication and coordination among patient representatives, the scientific/medical community, and agencies. The Lyme community has been seeking this voice for a decade. We already have 69 co-sponsors on this bill and we're picking up steam. I am pushing hard for the Energy and Commerce Committee to hold a hearing on this bill.

Congratulations again on the opening of the Lyme & Tick-Borne Diseases Research Center at Columbia University. Let me assure you that I will remain committed to working in Congress to fight for Lyme disease patients and those dedicated individuals, like so many of you, devoted to helping them.

Sincerely,  
Chris Smith  
Member of Congress