

**Historic Lyme Bill, HR 220,
Reintroduced in New Congress
by Rep. Chris Smith**



,
founder and co-chair of the Congressional Lyme Disease Caucus,
reintroduced legislation on January 3rd, the first legislative

day of the 116th Congress, to create a new national strategy on Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases and have a better coordinated federal response across agencies to fight, treat and prevent tick-borne disease. The bill number is HR 220, and Minnesota Congressman Collin Peterson is the lead Democratic co-sponsor of the legislation.

Regarding the legislation, LDA President, also an HHS Tick-Borne Disease Working Group member, Pat Smith, said: "Everyone deserves protection against Lyme disease, yet Lyme has marched forward unchallenged across the US for decades, disabling many including our most precious resources, our children, who are a high risk group. CDC announced in its Vital Signs monthly report that tick-borne disease case numbers have doubled between 2004-2016, and the US is not prepared to deal with this threat—a fact substantiated by the 2017 record number of CDC-reported Lyme cases, 42,743. Factoring in under-reporting, 427,430 new Lyme cases occurred in the US alone in 2017, a staggering number, which does not include other tick-borne diseases (TBD) and disorders facing Americans.

Tick vectors of disease continue to proliferate unchecked, and the recent emergence over last year of a new self-cloning tick in the US that can lay up to 2,000 eggs, longicornis—that has already spread to nine states—should signal that we have a new enemy, yet we still have no idea what damage this one can do. Everyone is a potential casualty. This bill provides a plan for a national strategy under HHS to help, through research, patients already debilitated by Lyme/TBD—fighting for diagnosis, treatment and for their very lives—and to help prevent others from facing the same fate by developing methods of tick control. The time for Congress to act on this bill is now! Losing this war is not an option, everyone is a potential casualty."

The bill comes shortly after the HHS Tick-Borne Disease Working Group released its first annual report to Congress which states, "[t]ick-borne diseases have rapidly become a

serious and growing threat to public health in the United States... Studies indicate that Lyme disease costs approximately \$1.3 billion each year in direct medical costs alone in the United States. A comprehensive understanding of the full economic and societal cost remains unknown... Prompt diagnosis and treatment of tick-borne diseases are crucial to prevent long-term complications. Today, available diagnostic tests can be inaccurate and complex to interpret, especially during the earliest stage of infection when treatment is most effective... This leaves physicians without the tools needed to diagnose; and without an accurate diagnosis, it is challenging for physicians to provide early treatment... Persistent symptoms after treatment of Lyme disease can be severe, yet their cause(s) remains unknown and debated. There are currently no uniformly accepted or validated treatment options for patients with these chronic symptoms... Increased Federal funding, prioritization, and leadership are needed to reverse the alarming trends associated with tick-borne diseases.”

The Lyme Disease Association, Inc. supports the bill and will be posting updates on actions that can be taken to help support the passage of this ground breaking legislation.

Congressman Smith Press release

To read about the original introduction of the last House Session of this bill in 2018, [Click Here](#).

[Click here for HR 220 Bill Text](#)