

# Congressman Hall (NY) Backs Lyme Bill

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**Hall Calls on Federal Government to Increase Fight Against Lyme Disease, Backs Bill to Expand Funding for Treatment and Prevention**

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***-Legislation Would Provide \$100M Over 5 Years to Expand Lyme-Related Research and Education***

***-NY Has Most Lyme Cases in Nation, Dutchess County Leads the State-***

*Wappingers Falls, NY* – Joining with local Lyme Disease advocates and victims in the county home to a nearly one-quarter of New York State’s diagnosed cases, U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-Dover) today announced he is pushing new federal measures to provide nearly \$100 Million in expanded funding for Lyme Disease treatment and prevention over the next five years. This financial support to combat Lyme would be provided by the Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Prevention, Education, and Research Act of 2009 (H.R. 1179), which Hall is a co-sponsor of. Additionally, Hall has written a letter advocating for a \$10 million investment for research into Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses through the Congressionally Directed Medical Research program.

“We need to get a commitment from the federal government to properly educate people about how to avoid exposure to Lyme disease and what actions need to be taken if you think you’ve become infected,” said Hall, a member of the Congressional Lyme Disease Caucus. “If the federal and state governments make a commitment that matches that which has been made by Dutchess County, nothing else will have as positive and lasting influence in reducing the incidence of Lyme disease both locally and nationally.”

The \$100 Million over five years provided by the Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Prevention, Education, and Research Act of 2009 would be used to expand federal investments in the efforts to prevent more Lyme disease infections, educate both doctors and the public how to spot the signs of Lyme disease and advance the research activities that are making modern treatments for infected people so much more effective than their predecessors. Also, the Lyme-target funding for the Congressionally Directed Medical Research program that Hall has called for would direct one of America’s most important medical research programs to supply millions of dollars of research grants annually to help forge new and better treatments for the disease.

“I am appalled at the lack of concern about Lyme disease,” said Pat Smith, president of the national Lyme Disease Association. “Our children are being struck down by this disease more than any other segment of the population, yet they cannot get properly diagnosed and treated because there is no accurate test and little research to answer the questions such as why some people continue to have symptoms and what is the role of co-infections. We need the federal bill HR 1179 to focus government attention and monies on this growing threat from our outdoors.”

More than 220,000 Americans develop Lyme disease each year. New York State currently leads the nation in the number of Lyme Disease cases with over 27,000 reported in 2007, nearly 15 percent of the national total. Since 1993 there has been almost a 50 percent increase in the number of Lyme disease diagnoses in New York. Dutchess County alone accounts for roughly one-quarter of those diagnoses, and has the third highest number of new infections of any county in the country.

One such local resident who was afflicted by Lyme Disease and now advocates for its better treatment is Jill Auerbach, Chair of the Hudson Valley Lyme Disease Association. Ms. Auerbach suffered for far too long because her Lyme Disease went undiagnosed or misdiagnosed for years. After suffering from Lyme symptoms but having been undiagnosed with the disease for at least a decade, Ms. Auerbach finally had to leave her job. She stopped going to doctors after countless dismissals that her illness was purely mental and not actually physical. However, at a point when Ms. Auerbach felt she had no recourse left, a friend who had been treated for Lyme disease provided her with the names of several “Lyme-Literate” physicians whose disease-specific expertise allowed her to finally be diagnosed and treated for Lyme. Soon after she was able to return to her job and the normalcy in life she had been missing for so long.

“I live in Dutchess County, one of the top three counties in the nation for Lyme Disease cases, yet I still get calls from community people who can’t locate a physician to diagnose or treat them. I find it unconscionable that after three decades of expanding epidemic, we still do not have widespread programs educating physicians and the public about the disease in this country,” said Ms. Auerbach. “We are very appreciative of Congressman Hall’s concern, interest and actions in combating this serious health threat to our region and nation.”

“The Hudson Valley’s natural beauty is unrivaled, but unfortunately so are the threats to public health from ticks,” Hall added. “Residents, visitors and especially our children should not have to fear for their safety from Lyme Disease, or even its treatment, when taking advantage of our area’s natural resources.”

