

Smith Unveils Lyme Disease Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressmen Chris Smith (R-NJ) today announced the introduction of a bill he wrote to combat Lyme disease, and thanked original co-sponsors Bart Stupak (D-MI) Frank Wolf (R-VA) and Tim Holden, (D-PA).

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<http://chris-smith.house.gov>

CDC Data: Cases on the rise, highest among kids ages 5-14

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressmen Chris Smith (R-NJ) today announced the introduction of a bill he wrote to combat Lyme disease, and thanked original co-sponsors Bart Stupak (D-MI) Frank Wolf (R-VA) and Tim Holden, (D-PA).

Smith is the sponsor of the “Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Prevention, Education, and Research Act of 2009.” The measure, H.R. 1179, would expand federal efforts concerning the prevention, education, treatment, and research activities related to Lyme and other tick-borne diseases, including the establishment of a Tick-Borne Diseases Advisory Committee. Smith, Stupak, Wolf and Holden are co-chairs of the House Lyme Disease Caucus.

H.R. 1179 authorizes a much needed increase in total research and education of \$100 million over five years. The bill also contains measures to ensure that resources are expended effectively to provide the most benefit to people with Lyme and other

tick-borne diseases. It also seeks improved surveillance and prevention and clinical outcomes research to determine the long-term course of the illness and effectiveness of different treatments. The Tick-Borne Diseases Advisory Committee would ensure coordination and communication among many federal agencies, a broad range of medical professionals, and patients.

“Lyme is one of the most prevalent diseases in the U.S. today,” said Smith. “About 220,000 Americans develop Lyme disease each year, and we suspect that number is a conservative estimate. This bill provides a comprehensive national effort to step up the fight against this ever-growing threat. My state of New Jersey is particularly hard hit.”

While Lyme accounts for 90 percent of tick-borne diseases in the U.S., the same tick species spreads other diseases, such as anaplasmosis and babesiosis. Other tick species spread diseases, such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever and southern tick-associated illness. More than 30 affiliate organizations of the Lyme Disease Association Inc., headquartered in Jackson, N.J. in Smith’s district, support the measure.

“I am pleased to join my colleagues on the Lyme Disease Caucus in introducing this legislation to help prevent, accurately diagnose and effectively treat Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses that impact more than 200,000 Americans every year,” Stupak said. “Although Lyme disease receives little attention, cases remain on the rise in the United States and in 63 countries around the world. Devoting modest resources to education and prevention will save us millions that would otherwise be spent on treatment down the road.”

“Federal efforts to address Lyme Disease should be a priority,” said Congressman Wolf. “This legislation, which will create a Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Advisory Committee at the Department of Health and Human Services and authorize funding for the development of a more sensitive and more accurate test to diagnose this dreaded

disease, is critical. Not only is this legislation aimed at treatment and research to assist those suffering from Lyme, it would also heighten education and awareness efforts to ensure those at risk of being infected know how to protect themselves and their families.”

“This legislation represents years of work with the Lyme advocacy community to reach consensus on how to best move forward,” said Rep. Holden. “It aims to deliver on promises made to Lyme patients and their families to better focus the federal government’s efforts on detection and research for more effective treatments.”

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) estimates that only 10 percent of Lyme cases meeting this criteria may be reported. Lyme disease can lead to chronic illness and can affect every system in the body, including the central nervous system. Advanced symptoms include arthritis of weight-bearing joints, neurological and cardiac problems, encephalopathy and memory problems. The CDC has determined that from 1992 to 2006, the incidence of Lyme disease was highest among children aged 5 to 14 years of age.

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