

Federal Lyme Legislation Gaining Momentum in the Northeast

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For Immediate Release

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Jackson, NJ June 11, 2006—The Lyme Disease Prevention, Education and Research Act of 2005, HR-3427 (Chris Smith/Sue Kelly), introduced in the U.S. House, has had a huge increase in co-sponsors this spring. RI congressmen demonstrated 100% support of this bill by early February 2006. Other Congressmen have followed. Every member of congress in Connecticut is now committed to sign on as a co-sponsor. Currently, New York has 28 of 29 representatives cosponsoring, PA has 53%, and NJ has 50%. The legislation will authorize an additional \$20 million annually for Lyme disease research, education and prevention over five years. Improved surveillance and prevention, development of accurate diagnostic tests, research to understand long-term illness, and formation of a Tick-Borne Advisory Committee are in the bill.

U.S. Senate companion bill, S-1479 (Christopher Dodd/Rick Santorum), now has 100% committed support from the senators in Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey and Senator Rick Santorum from Pennsylvania. Lyme cases are on the rise nationwide, and the legislators understand the need for more research to stop the spread of tick-borne diseases (TBD) and to develop a definitive test to help clinicians diagnose Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is only a portion of the problem. The diagnostic and treatment picture is clouded by the spread of other tick-borne diseases carried by the same tick that carries Lyme disease. Additionally, other ticks, including the lone star tick, are on the move, spreading throughout the Northeast, carrying a Lyme-like disease called STARI, southern tick-associated rash illness, and a number of other tick-borne diseases which can be acquired by one tick bite.

Our children are at the highest risk for tick-borne diseases due to their play habits and unawareness of a disease lurking in their backyards. Unfortunately, they are often some of the hardest hit, losing years of school. A recent study from Columbia University demonstrated a 22 point drop in IQ for a child with Lyme, reversible with treatment.

The Lyme Disease Association (LDA) is a national organization whose goals are Lyme disease education, prevention, raising research dollars, and patient support. We applaud CT, RI, NY, NJ, PA, and all federal legislators from other states for their commitment to these bills. We urge everyone to check <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/c109query.html> to see if his/her congressmen have signed on yet. If they have not, call, fax, email them today and ask them to co-sponsor these bills.