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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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CO-CHAIRMAN, TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS
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SUBCOMMITTEE

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Dear Friends,

Congratulations to the Lyme Disease Association, and your tenacious, outstanding President, Pat Smith, for hitting this remarkable milestone—the 20th annual conference on Lyme and Other Tick-Borne Diseases: Scientific Update for Clinicians and Researchers.

For 20 years, the LDA has brought together experts in the fields of science and public health to enhance our understanding of the huge risks posed by Lyme and other tick-borne diseases. At the same time, the LDA has remained extraordinarily steadfast in the pursuit of better diagnosis, treatments and long-term sustainable solutions for Lyme patients.

It has been an absolute honor and rewarding experience to partner with Pat Smith and the LDA to push our government and my colleagues in Congress to more effectively combat Lyme and tick-borne diseases.

Since the 1990s, I've authored more than a dozen comprehensive bills on Lyme. We have had some important successes, steering millions of federal dollars to Lyme research through the Congressional Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) at the Department of Defense and through the Centers for Disease Control. In fact, earlier this year, the House of Representatives adopted two of my amendments to increase funding at each of these agencies.

In addition, during a previous session of congress, legislation I spearheaded to help create the federal Tick-Borne Disease Working Group was added to the 21st Century Cures Act. Late last year, the Working Group—of which Pat Smith is a distinguished member—released its first report, the *"2018 Report to Congress"*.

Much of what we have argued, for more than a quarter century, has now been scientifically confirmed by the Working Group, including the fact that massive numbers of people—hundreds of thousands per year—are newly diagnosed with Lyme and yet the federal response to date has been ***woefully inadequate***.

Among other things, The Working Group's report:

- validates chronic Lyme;
- notes that diagnoses are often inaccurate and complex to interpret;

Co-Chairman of the following: Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease • Bi-Partisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism • Lyme Disease Caucus
Coalition for Autism Research and Education • Bi-Partisan Congressional Pro-Life Caucus • Bosnia Caucus • Poland Caucus • Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs
Congressional Caucus on Human Trafficking • Vietnam Caucus • Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition • Fragile X Caucus • Spina Bifida Caucus • Hungarian Caucus
Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases Caucus • Hong Kong Caucus • Congressional Pediatric and Adult Hydrocephalus Caucus

- underscores that there are no uniformly accepted or validated treatment options; and
- reveals that “federal funding for tick-borne diseases is less per new surveillance case than that of any other disease...”

Simply put, the Working Group’s Report is historic, comprehensive, transformative—and an urgent call for action.

And we are ready with a bold response and a bold solution.

Earlier this year working with Pat, the LDA and others, I introduced the **TICK Act, HR 3073**. Predicated on my previous legislation, the *Tick Act* develops a whole-of-government National Strategy to prevent and treat Lyme and other vector-borne diseases. It creates a new federal office dedicated solely to developing and implementing the National strategy to combat Lyme and it reauthorizes regional centers for excellence in vector-borne disease.


The *Tick Act* also authorizes \$120 million over six years for federal grants to improve data collection, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, and raise awareness.

Nearly three decades ago it was LDA President Pat Smith who asked me to push federal health policy leaders to recognize Lyme and tick-borne diseases and bring real relief to patients and families combatting the disease. I’ve been all in ever since.

It has been a long battle—and it is not over, yet. But with these recent developments, your continued commitment and Pat’s effective and compassionate leadership, I am confident—and encouraged—that we will continue to accomplish much in the short term and someday, eradicate this catastrophic disease.

Thank you for your hard work and professional care for America’s Lyme disease patients.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

Member of Congress

Co-Chair Bipartisan Congressional Lyme Disease Caucus

