

## Postal Rate Changes

There is good news and bad news regarding postal rates. The March of Dimes lobbied Congress to provide funding to the U.S. Postal Service to help defray the additional costs of new security measures to protect postal employees and customers. On January 10, 2002, President Bush signed the "Department of Defense Appropriation Act, 2002" which includes \$500 million in emergency funds to assist the U.S. Postal Service in upgrading its facilities to protect against terrorism.

On a separate matter, the U.S. Postal Service has agreed to a settlement in the current rate case that is

likely to result in an increase in postal rates to take effect on June 30, 2002. The Postal Rate Commission has not yet approved the settlement but approval is expected. The rate increase will be less than originally proposed due in part to the emergency appropriation described above.

If approved, the change will increase rates by an average of 8.7%. Specifically, the cost of a first class stamp is slated to rise from 34 cents to 37 cents. In addition, the cost of Express Mail will increase by 9.7%; Priority Mail by 13.5%; periodicals by 10%; and, packages by 8.9%.

The *Advocacy Update* delivers legislative news about March of Dimes issues on a monthly basis.

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## Momentum Growing for SCHIP Expansion Legislation

Pending legislation to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to cover income eligible pregnant women continues to gain momentum. The March of Dimes has created an advocacy coalition and is leading the effort to enact federal legislation to provide states the option of expanding SCHIP to cover income eligible pregnant women age 19 and older. Since congressional visits made by chapter volunteers and staff during the Public Affairs Conference in October, 42 additional cosponsors have been added—more than doubling the number of cosponsors.

In a new and important development, on January 31, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson announced the administration's endorsement of S. 724, the "Mothers and Newborns

Health Insurance Act of 2001." Dr. Jennifer L. Howse said in a statement after the announcement that, "the March of Dimes shares Secretary Thompson's goal of improving access to health care for uninsured pregnant women and is pleased to have the administration's endorsement of legislation now pending in Congress that would achieve this important objective." The Secretary's endorsement strengthens the broad bipartisan support for enactment of federal legislation this year.

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, the Secretary also announced plans to issue a regulation that would define fetuses as children and thereby make prenatal care available to their mothers. The Foundation does not support this regulatory approach as it fails to establish program eligibility for the

pregnant woman and, we believe, will make state efforts to expand SCHIP more difficult by introducing a contentious new set of issues into the debate. Moreover, regulations issued by one administration can be overturned by future administrations. The March of Dimes believes the best way to achieve the goal of health coverage for this vulnerable population of women is legislation that permanently changes the law.

In addition to the support of the Bush administration, the bills currently pending in Congress are cosponsored by a broad bipartisan group of Members. Moreover, the National Governors Association (NGA) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) are on record in support of the pro-

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## Labor/HHS Appropriations Bill Signed

As a result of hard work by chapter volunteers and staff as well as OGA's ongoing advocacy effort, the FY 2002 appropriations for programs key to advancing March of Dimes mission fared very well. The "Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002" was signed into law on January 10, 2002 (Public Law 107-116). As mentioned in previous *Advocacy Update* stories, among the agen-

cies whose funding is included in this bill are the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes for Health (NIH), and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The table below details the funding levels for each program's agency of special interest to the March of Dimes.

Because of the Foundation's extensive work to establish and fund the new Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at CDC, it is particularly gratifying that the

Center received a 28% increase in funding compared to FY 2001. This is an important step in helping the Center during its first full year of operation. The nearly \$20 million increase in funding includes increases for birth defects surveillance, FAS and developmental disability surveillance as well as folic acid education. The specific dollar amounts allocated to each of these programs will be decided by the Center Director in the coming weeks.

Program	FY 2001 Funding	FY 2002 Funding	March of Dimes Recommendation FY 2002
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Total)	4,046	4,293	---
Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities	70	90	93.5
Immunization	552	628	664
Polio Eradication (CDC Activities)	91.4	102.4	106.4
Polio Eradication (U.S. Agency for International Development)	27.5	27.5	30
National Institutes of Health (Total)	20,300	23,285	23,700
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development	976	1,114	1,137
National Human Genome Research Institute	382	430	445
National Center on Minority Health Disparities	130	158	151
Health Resources and Services Administration (Total)	5,525	6,081	---
Maternal and Child Health Block Grant	714	732	850
Healthy Start	90	99	90
Consolidated Health Centers	1,164	1,344	1,344
Newborn Hearing Screening	8	10	12.5

## Selected 2001 State Advocacy Accomplishments

### Access:

- 9 Chapters led successful state initiatives to expand Medicaid or SCHIP

### Newborn Screening:

- Nearly all Chapters conducted Phase I of a two phase effort
- 9 Chapters moved beyond Phase I to expand state programs through legislative or regulatory action

### Birth Defects Surveillance:

- 5 Chapters led successful initiatives to establish or expand surveillance programs

## U.S. Census Bureau Revises Data

The U.S. Census Bureau found an error in their 2000 data on uninsured Americans. Correcting this error requires modification of the data runs the Census Bureau did for the March of Dimes in the fall 2001 on uninsured children and women age 15-44. The correction changes the percentage of uninsured and the rankings for some states, especially with respect to uninsured children. In citing the Census Bureau data, chapters should use the revised table that can be found on the March of Dimes web site at <http://www.modimes.org/about2/PressReleases/2001/NumbersImprove.htm>. The updated table is the second item listed at the bottom of the news release.

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posals, and twenty-five national organizations, including the March of Dimes, are working to achieve enactment of legislation this year.

While momentum in support of federal legislation is building, states are also taking action. Governor Bill Owens (R-Colo.) recently announced his intention to seek a federal waiver to make pregnant women eligible for the state's

For an up-to-date list of cosponsors, select an Internet link:

**Link to Senate bill:**  
<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d107:SN00724:@@P>

**Link to House bill:**  
<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d107:HR02610:@@P>

## PricewaterhouseCoopers Report on Cost of Newborn Screening

One of the Foundation-wide advocacy priorities for 2002 is expanding newborn screening and treatment. Currently, the March of Dimes recommends that all newborns be screened for nine metabolic disorders as well as hearing.

As chapters around the country work with state policy makers to achieve this goal, they may be asked about the cost of providing additional newborn screening tests. Since such data are not always readily available, the March of Dimes engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP (PwC) to prepare a report on this aspect of newborn screening.

Using data they gathered from

a survey of states, the authors of the report were able to develop average estimates of the costs of adding newborn screening tests. Note that the report does not address hearing screening nor does it include information on the costs of testing for medium-chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase (MCAD) deficiency, as this test was added to the March of Dimes list of recommended screenings January 2002.

The report was sent to chapters and is also located on the March of Dimes web site at: <http://www.modimes.org/healthlibrary2/pubpolicystudies/final%20pwc%20nbs%20report2.pdf>

## Chapters Awarded 2002 Public Affairs Grants

Forty-four grants were awarded to chapters in thirty-four states to support state activities and projects that focus on the Foundation's public affairs mission priorities. Chapters applied for funding under two categories: (1) Innovative Projects and (2) Consultant Services. Grantees are:

### Innovative Projects (\$92,800):

**North-**IL, IN, ME, MN, NH, PR, RI, WI **South-** AL, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MO, NC, TN, VA, WV **West-**CA

### Consultants (\$231,500):

**North-**CT, IL, IN, MA, MI, NJ, NY (2), OH, PA, PR, VT **South-**DC, FL, GA, MO, MS, SC, TN, VA, WV **West-**AZ, CA, KS, TX

SCHIP plan – the only way currently available for states to cover women age 19 and older. The Governor's initiative, now pending in the state legislature, would extend Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), Colorado's State Children's Health Insurance Program, to income eligible pregnant women age 19 and older. According to Colorado officials, the expansion would cover 3,300 currently uninsured, low-income women. The March of Dimes Colorado Chapter has testified before committees of the General Assembly and Senate in support of the Governor's proposal and the proposed legislation.

OGA will continue to promote a federal statutory change—which is permanent and void of controversy—and will continue to rely on chapters to generate support from Members of their state delegations.