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Advocacy Update

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Direct Questions or
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CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING HELD ON BIRTH DEFECTS SURVEILLANCE, RESEARCH, AND PREVENTION

On January 31, congressional staff from more than 30 offices joined birth defects researchers and program directors from all 50 states for lunch and a briefing on birth defects surveillance, research, and prevention. The briefing, held in the historic U.S. Senate Caucus Room, was sponsored by Senators Kit Bond (R-MO) and Chris Dodd (D-CT), the March of Dimes, and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network.

A distinguished panel presented information about the leading causes of infant mortality. Panelists also spoke about current promising research and successful prevention activities at the federal and state levels.

The briefing was held in conjunction with the 2006 National Birth Defects Prevention Network meeting, which was held in Crystal City, Virginia from January 30 to February 1.

Speakers at the briefing were:

- Marcia Feldkamp, P.A., M.S.P.H., Immediate Past President, National Birth Defects Prevention Network, Utah
- Peggy Honein, Ph.D., Senior Epidemiologist, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Georgia
- Thomas Sadler, Ph.D., Visiting Professor, University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine, Florida
- Heather Trammell, parent of a child with Down syndrome, Virginia

Previous notable events that took place in the Senate Caucus Room included an investigation on the sinking of the Titanic (1912), the Army-McCarthy (1954), Watergate (1973), and Iran-Contra (1987) hearings, and the Supreme Court confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas (1991).

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Audience Listens to Presentation at Briefing

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION'S BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007

OVERVIEW

The Administration's Fiscal Year 2007 (FY07) budget was released February 6. Like last year, the 2007 budget proposes holding overall discretionary spending growth below the rate of inflation and again recommends cutting non-security discretionary spending. The 2007 budget also proposes major savings in or eliminations of 141 federal programs to generate savings of nearly \$15 billion in FY 07. Neither Medicaid nor the State Children's Health Insurance Program are a substantial target for funding reductions.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007: MARCH OF DIMES FEDERAL FUNDING PRIORITIES

(Dollars in Millions)

PROGRAM	FY 2006 FUNDING	ADMINISTRATION'S FY 2007 BUDGET PROPOSAL		
		Total	+/-	%
National Institutes of Health (Total)	28,587	28,587	0	0
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development	1,265	1,257	-8	-0.6
National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke	1,535	1,525	-10	-0.7

National Human Genome Research Institute	486	483	-3	-0.6
National Center on Minority Health and Disparities	195	194	-1	-0.5
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Total)	8,401	8,223	-179	-2.1
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities	125	110	-15	-12
Immunization	520	507	-13	-2.5
National Center for Health Statistics	109	109	0	0
Safe Motherhood/Infant Health	44	44	0	0
Health Resources and Services Administration (Total)	6,570	6,315	-255	-3.9
Maternal and Child Health Block Grant	693	693	0	0
Newborn Hearing Screening	10	0	-10	-100
Consolidated (Community) Health Centers	1,782	1,963	+181	10.2
Healthy Start	102	102	0	0
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality	319	319	0	0
HHS Office of Minority Health	56	46	-10	-17.9

MARCH OF DIMES CHAPTERS AWARDED PUBLIC AFFAIRS GRANTS

The National Public Affairs Committee and the Office of Government Affairs are pleased to announce that 37 Chapters have been awarded 2006 grants for support of state public affairs activities and projects to advance the Foundation's advocacy priorities. Chapters receiving public affairs grants are:

In Dollars		In Dollars	
AL	4,000	NV	2,133
AZ	3,000	NH	3,000
CA	12,000	NJ	7,500
CO	5,000	NY	7,000
CT	3,300	NC	10,000
DC	2,500	OK	3,000
FL	8,000	OH	5,000
GA	10,000	PA	7,000
ID	1,000	RI	5,500
IL	5,000	SC	8,000
IN	4,500	TN	14,000
KS	3,000	TX	3,750
KY	4,000	UT	5,000
MA	7,500	VA	6,500
MD	4,000	VT	8,000
MI	6,500	WA	5,334
MN	5,000	WI	3,333
MO	3,500	WV	5,000
MS	4,300		

HILARY POOL NEW ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, STATE AND CHAPTER AFFAIRS

On March 8, Hilary Pool will join the Office of Government Affairs staff as the Associate Director of State and Chapter Affairs. Among her duties will be to work collaboratively with Chapters and the regional offices to help advance state and Chapter advocacy initiatives and to assist OGA'S federal team in designing and implementing grassroots strategies to move forward the Foundation's national advocacy agenda.

Ms. Pool comes to OGA from the American Automobile Association's (AAA) Office of Government Relations where she served as Coordinator of State Relations. Prior to joining AAA, Hilary worked in Representative Jim Ramstad 's (R - MN) congressional office. She has a BA in government from Sweet Briar College in Sweet Briar, Virginia. Ms. Pool is replacing Jennifir Birtwhistle, who left the March of Dimes after 5 years to launch a new career in real estate.

REGION REPORTS

NORTH

Snow, rain, sleet, wind, and rain did not deter the northern region from advocating for March of Dimes issues.

Vermont Chapter Ambassador Tynan Sebastian-Arden Murray and his parents Kimberly and Tom made a compelling case for March of Dimes issues when they met with Governor James Douglas at the Chapter's annual Lobby Day event on January 26. To the surprise of his frightened parents, Tynan was born at 26 weeks gestation, almost 14 weeks premature.



Vermont Governor James Douglas with Ambassador Family Kimberly, Tom, and Tynan Murray at the Vermont Statehouse for Lobby Day.

Protecting access to health coverage and decreasing Vermont's high smoking rates during pregnancy lead the March of Dimes 2006 state policy priorities. Both issues are related to the problem of premature birth. Volunteers testified before the House Human Services Committee, urging legislators to maintain current eligibility, benefits, and cost sharing protections for pregnant women, infants, and children under Medicaid and Vermont's Dr. Dynasaur program. They also testified in support of funding for smoking cessation programs and an increased cigarette excise tax. Volunteers and staff also met with House Speaker Gaye Symington to discuss March of Dimes priorities.

Minnesota Chapter volunteer Donna Zimmerman has been appointed to the National Office of Volunteers (NOV) as the Northern Region's representative to the National Public Affairs Committee. Donna is Vice-President of Government and Community Relations for HealthPartners, a non-profit, consumer-governed health care organization in Bloomington, Minnesota. Donna has been a March of Dimes volunteer for 15 years, serving in leadership positions including Division Board Chair, State Board Chair,

and State Public Affairs Chair, her current role. Under her leadership, the Minnesota Chapter successfully led two public policy initiatives in 2004 and was the Northern Region Public Affairs Chapter of the Year. Donna replaces Harris Brooks who was recently named Chair of the NOV. In addition to serving as a public affairs resource to all Chapters in the region, Donna will work with the Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire Chapters to support overall Chapter performance. The Northern Region team welcomes Donna to her new role and looks forward to sharing her expertise and experience with the region.

SOUTH

Advocacy activities have kept the southern Chapters warm this winter.

Congratulations to the Greater Kentucky Chapter for engaging Governor Ernie Fletcher in WalkAmerica. The Governor has asked all state employees to support and participate in Walk. This is a perfect example of how Chapters can creatively integrate public affairs with other functional areas, especially fundraising. Kudos to the Kentucky Chapter's Public Affairs Chair, Russ Colwell, and Lead Public Affairs Staff, Katrina Adams-Thompson, for their exceptional leadership.

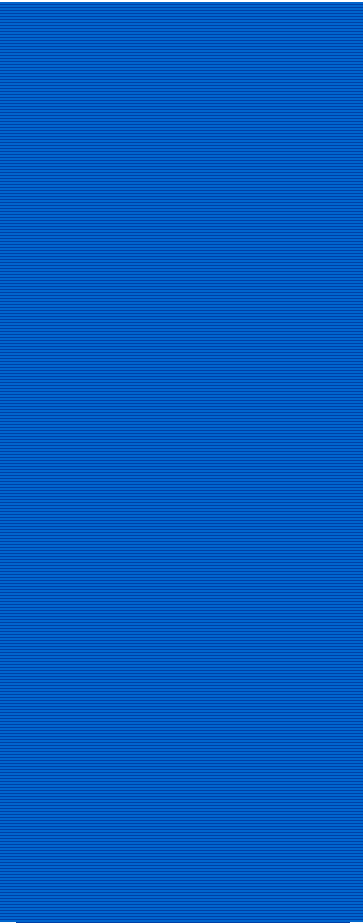
Public Affairs volunteers and staff from the Tennessee Chapter were invited to meet with Governor Phil Bredesen and the Director of the TennCare Bureau to discuss the design and implementation of a planned expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Over the last few years, as TennCare reform has been a top concern for officials in the state, the Tennessee Chapter has worked closely with Governor Bredesen and his staff to address the needs of pregnant women, infants, and children. Chapter Public Affairs Chair Mike Mizell, Public Affairs Committee and Program Services Committee volunteer Cheryl Major, State Director Leslie Ladd, Lead Public Affairs Staff Pearl Hann, and Tennessee's Public Affairs Consultant Mary Nell Bryan have been instrumental in ensuring that health coverage for women of child bearing age and children is protected, and even improved, in the face of major restructuring of TennCare.

WEST

Greetings from the Wild West.

As we rang in the New Year, Western Region Chapters began in earnest to advocate in support of programs to improve the health of women and children. The New Mexico and Washington State Chapters have already conducted lobby days at the Capitol, while several additional Chapters are in the planning process.

Most Chapters in the West are in the midst of legislative sessions, many of which are abbreviated. This means volunteers and staff are working hard and



fast. Chapter volunteers and staff in Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, and Utah have testified before legislative committees, visited legislators, and secured bill sponsors. Several more will submit testimony or testify in person soon. Issues on which Chapters are focusing include Foundation-wide priorities such as birth defects surveillance, newborn screening, and access to coverage, as well as Chapter choice issues like fetal alcohol syndrome, prevention and treatment of substance abuse, and licensure of genetic counselors. Other Chapters are hard at work on volunteer recruitment or conducting the necessary research on agenda items as preparation for future advocacy initiatives.

Western Region Chapters also continue to reach out to our congressional delegations to secure cosponsors for the PREEMIE Act. Alaska, Nevada, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Washington secured commitments from at least one member of their delegation to sign-on as a cosponsor of the legislation. Keep up the good work!

The March of Dimes welcomed four new lead public affairs staff to the Western Region in early 2006: Kevin McTeague (Idaho), Debbie Donovan (Montana), Allison Gillespie (South Dakota), and Stephen McDonald (Utah) joined the Foundation in the last two months. Welcome all.