

# March of Dimes

May 2002

## Advocacy Update *from the Office of Government Affairs*



### Introduction of SMART Mom Act Announced at Press Conference

On April 25, March of Dimes President, Dr. Jennifer L. Howse, joined Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-M.D.)

and Representatives John Dingell (D-Mich.) and Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) at a press conference called

to announce the introduction of the "Safe Motherhood Act for Research and Treatment" (SMART Mom Act) in the Senate (S. 2328) and House (H.R. 4602). Other co-sponsors of the legislation include Senators Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), John



Edwards (D-N.C.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.).

The bill is designed to improve the health of pregnant women and their infants by calling for more research and public education to prevent complications of pregnancy.

On behalf of the March of Dimes, Dr. Howse expressed support for the bills and she highlighted the "particular interest to the March of Dimes [of the] bill's provision to expand research into preterm labor and delivery." Dr. Howse noted that additional research

into the causes of preterm labor and delivery opens the way for development of effective clinical trials, interventions, treatments and even prevention.

In addition to Dr. Howse's participation in the press conference, the March of Dimes submitted a statement in support of the bill to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. This statement can be



found on the March of Dimes web site at [www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com).



#### Inside

- National "Do Not Call" Registry Proposed (page 2)
- Mass Expands Birth Defects Monitoring Program (page 2)
- Postal Rate Increase Approved (page 2)
- March of Dimes Testifies before House Appropriations Subcmte. (page 2)
- News You Can Use (page 3)
- West Virginia Achieves Unexpected Legislative Victory (page 3)
- NY Chapter Wins Funding Prenatal Care for Immigrant Women (page 4)

## National “Do Not Call” Registry Proposed

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has proposed a regulation that includes the establishment of a national telemarketing “do not call” registry. If the proposed regulation becomes final, individuals will be able to prohibit telemarketers from contacting them, including telemarketing firms calling on behalf of charities.

The March of Dimes, which contracts with outside telemarketing firms for a portion of its fund-raising and volunteer recruitment, submitted comments to the FTC on the proposed regulation. The Foundation’s comment letter raised the following concerns: (1) if the proposed regulation becomes final in its current form, charities that use

telemarketing firms will experience increases in fund-raising costs; (2) the proposed “do not call” registry would apply only to charities that use outside firms not to charities that use staff to carry out telemarketing, thereby creating an inequitable system; and (3) the proposed rule would prohibit charities from contacting prior donors and volunteers if these individuals place their names on the national “do not call” registry.

The FTC comment period closed on April 15 and because of the large volume of comments expected, the agency is not likely to publish a final regulation until late 2002.

### Postal Rate Increase Approved

The USPS Board of Governors approved the postal rate increase negotiated as part of the recent settlement with mailers. The rate increase will result in the cost of a first-class stamp rising 3 cents, there will be a 2-cent boost in the cost of postage for post cards, and most other mail charges will also rise. The increase goes into affect June 30, 2002.

### Mass Expands BDS Program

A culmination of four years of advocacy by Mass. chapter volunteers and staff happened on March 28 when Acting Governor Jane Swift (R) signed legislation to expand the state birth defects monitoring program. (See photo)



This expansion enables diagnosing physicians

to join birthing hospitals as the source of reported data on birth defects. The bill also expands monitoring to include children up to the age of three.

Although appropriating legislation has not been introduced, the State Department of Public Health has allocated \$50,000 to assist with the expansion.

### March of Dimes Testifies before House Appropriations Subcommittee

On May 7 Nancy Myers, member, Ohio Chapter Executive Committee, testified on behalf of the March of Dimes before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. Myers encouraged the Subcommittee to increase funding for federal programs that advance the Foundation’s mission.

Myers highlighted areas where, by providing adequate funding, Congress could take some significant, but affordable, steps to improve the health of mothers, infants and children.

She called on the Subcommittee to increase funding to \$115 million in FY2003 for the National Center on

Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Myers recommended that the Subcommittee



direct additional funding to three Center supported programs: state birth defects surveillance cooperative agreements, folic acid education, and research underway at the eight regional Centers on Birth Defects Research and Prevention. Myers also noted that

CDC’s global immunization program is critical to the eradication of polio worldwide.

In addition, Myers expressed support of the five-year campaign to

**Continued on page 3**

## New Report Underscores Need for Outreach to Uninsured Children

Together, Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) provide a broad safety net to protect children from becoming uninsured. While 9 million children remain uninsured, lack of eligibility for health insurance coverage is no longer the reason these children lack insurance. Other barriers to enrollment must be addressed in order to reduce the number of uninsured children. These are the key findings of *Children's Eligibility for Medicaid and SCHIP: A View from 2000*, a report by Lisa Dubay, Jennifer Haley, and Genevieve Kenney of

the Urban Institute.

Most uninsured children are eligible for publicly-sponsored coverage (77% in this study). Because they found that twice as many uninsured children are eligible for Medicaid than SCHIP, the authors argue that attention must focus on increasing enrollment of eligible children in state Medicaid programs as well as SCHIP.

Conducting outreach and simplifying the enrollment process are part of the solution to improving program participation, but additional strategies need to be developed in order to ensure that all eli-

gible children are enrolled and remain covered. For example, the authors cite an earlier survey indicating that 18 percent of uninsured children had been enrolled in SCHIP or Medicaid during the past year.

The report was prepared for *Assessing the New Federalism*, a multiyear project to monitor and assess the devolution of social programs from the federal to the state and local levels. It is available from the Urban Institute at [www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org).

## West Virginia Achieves Unexpected Legislative Victory

West Virginia chapter volunteers and staff achieved an unexpected but gratifying legislative victory this session. In only eight weeks they drafted a bill to expand the state's birth defects surveillance program, found the necessary sponsors, and obtained a unanimous vote in the legislature. This extraordinary effort culminated on March 29 when Gov. Bob Wise (D) signed Senate Bill 672 at a ceremony attended by March of Dimes volunteers and staff (See photo).



Recognizing that the state's current surveillance system was deficient due to under reporting of birth defects data, the chapter partnered with the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health to

develop an authorizing bill designed to improve the program. Since the state had recently received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to improve the existing system, no additional funding was needed for this upgrade.

The chapter used their lobby day to ask for support of the legislation. Fortunately, on the very day that volunteers and staff visited the capitol, House Finance Committee held a hearing at which legislators discussed the bill. As a final push another set of visits was made one day before the end of the session at which time chapter volunteers and staff visited 90 of the 100 Delegates. The legislation passed unanimously.

The new law takes effect on July 1, 2002.

## Continued from page 2

double funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). She mentioned in particular the March of Dimes interest in additional funding for the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Human Genome Research Institute.

Myers also raised with Subcommittee members the importance to the March of Dimes of several programs administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). With respect to HRSA, she urged the Subcommittee to support an appropriation of \$25 million for support of state efforts to expand newborn screening programs.

The full text of Nancy Myers' testimony is posted on the March of Dimes web site at [www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com).

## NY Chapter Wins Prenatal Care Funding for Immigrant Women

After five years of lobbying by New York March of Dimes volunteers and staff in partnership with members of The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and The New York Immigration Coalition, Governor George E. Pataki (R) signed an appropriations bill to fund prenatal care services for up to 11,000 low-income pregnant women in NY state. These women will receive essential prenatal care services irrespective of their citizenship status. This achievement is particularly poignant in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 tragedy.

At the bill signing, Governor

Pataki said “By ensuring quality health care for new and expecting mothers, this legislation will help provide the healthy start in life that all of New York’s children deserve.” Dr. Machelles Allen of NYU Medical Center and Co-chair of the NY March of Dimes Public Affairs Committee stated “This is a clear victory for the children of those women who, for fear of deportation, were not able to receive prenatal care - and we are all too familiar with the consequences of no prenatal care.”

During the five-year effort, chapter volunteers and staff met with key state legislators, the Governor’s staff and representative of the budget office.

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

Editor:  
Christina F. Manero

If you have questions or comments about the *Advocacy Update*, contact:

**March of Dimes  
Birth Defects Foundation  
Office of Government Affairs  
1146 19th Street, N.W.  
6th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Telephone: (202) 659-1800  
Fax: (202) 296-2964**

copyright © March of Dimes  
May 2002



*Office of Government Affairs*  
1146 19th Street, N.W., 6th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20036