

PREEMIE Act (S. 707 and H.R. 2861)

Preterm birth is a national problem that requires a national solution, such as the PREEMIE Act.

The Institute of Medicine estimated the annual societal economic burden associated with preterm birth in the United States was at least \$26.2 billion in 2005.

Preterm birth can devastate families, and affects employers and private and public programs. The March of Dimes, through its Prematurity Campaign, will continue to invest in research and education to prevent preterm birth. But the federal government must bring the public and private sector together and provide a unified approach to the problem and best leverage the available resources.

Premature birth is the number one killer of newborns. Nearly 10,000 babies are born preterm each week and one quarter of those who survive will suffer disabilities and life long health problems.

The PREEMIE Act is a sound investment. It calls for spending \$91 million over 5 years to solve this \$26 billion problem.

The PREEMIE Act calls for:

- ◆ Convening a Surgeon General's conference on preterm birth to establish a public-private agenda that will speed the development of prevention strategies for preterm labor and delivery.
- ◆ Coordination and expansion of federally supported research related to preterm labor and delivery and the care and treatment of preterm infants.
- ◆ Authorization of funding for demonstration projects to test promising prevention and treatment interventions.

The principal bill sponsors are Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Representatives Fred Upton (R-MI) and Anna Eshoo (D-CA). The Act has strong bipartisan support, including 95 House cosponsors. It passed the U.S. Senate on August 1, 2006 and is awaiting action in the House of Representatives.