



ACTION ALERT

URGE YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO FUND HEPATITIS C IN THEIR APPROPRIATIONS PROGRAMMATIC REQUEST LETTERS

On Monday, President Bush kicked off the Fiscal Year 2009 appropriations process with the release of his budget proposal. The President's FY2009 budget flat funds the CDC Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH). We need your help in raising awareness of Members of Congress and asking their support for increased funding for hepatitis C activities at the federal level. Hepatitis advocates are asking for \$50 million for hepatitis funding, which is an increase of \$32.4 million over the current funding of \$17.6 million.

In the next few weeks, all Senators and Representatives will write their “programmatic appropriations request letters,” which ask members of the Appropriations Subcommittees (who put together the federal funding legislation) to include funding for their priorities. The more Members of Congress that include a request for hepatitis funding in their letters, the greater the likelihood the Appropriators will include additional funding in FY2009.

Hepatitis C impacts over 4 million Americans but there is only \$17.6 million in federal funding dedicated to hepatitis activities. We need you to tell your story and ask your elected representatives to take action by **February 22**.

Step-by-step instructions on what to do are below:

1. Determine what Members of Congress to contact. You should contact your personal Member of the House of Representatives and two Senators. You should also contact other House Members in areas where your organization is located or provides services. To determine who your Members are please go to www.Congress.org and type in your zip code(s).
2. Call the Members Offices (www.house.gov or www.senate.gov or link from Congress.org for contact info) to get the name and correct spelling of the staff person handling health care. Email the staff using the draft email text below. House staff emails are First.Last@mail.house.gov. Senate staff emails are First_Last@Last name of Senator.Senate.gov.

Sample email:

Your Name
State and Zip code

Dear Name of health care staff:

My name is _____ and I live in City/State. I am writing to urge Representative/Senator _____ to include funding for hepatitis C in his/her Fiscal Year 2009 programmatic appropriations request letter. [Include brief details on the impact of hepatitis C on yourself or describe your organization].

There are over 4 million Americans impacted by hepatitis C but the only dedicated federal funding stream provides a mere \$17.6 million through CDC. This is insufficient to provide the most basic public health services such as education, counseling, testing, or medical management.

For your convenience I have attached specific programmatic request language. I will be following up with you in the near future to discuss this request. In the meantime, feel free to contact me with questions.

Thank you again for consideration of my request.

Your Name

3. Follow-up with the staff you have emailed with a phone call to confirm they received the request and to determine when they may have an answer from their bosses as to whether or not they will include a hepatitis funding request in their Appropriation programmatic request letter. If asked, make it clear to the staff that this is a program request and NOT a project request (i.e. money for a district specific project like a bridge, hospital or university). You may need to follow-up again around the time the staff says they will have an answer from their chain of command.
4. If you need assistance or want to talk through the process please email or call one of the following advocates:

Ryan Clary, Project Inform, rclary@projectinform.org, 415.558.8669

Gary Rose, TIICANN, garyrose@verizon.net,

Laura Hanen, Hepatitis C Appropriations Partnership, lhane@nastad.org, 202.434.8091

Lorren Sandt, Hep C Caring Ambassadors, lorren@hepcchallenge.org, 360.86.4186

Sharon Phillips, Hep C Advocates Network, hepcan1@aol.com, 903.291.9700

Sue Perez, Treatment Action Group, sue.perez@treatmentactiongroup.org, 202.615.8831

5. If you get a positive response from a Member's office please share your success with Hepatitis C Advocates United by emailing hepcunited@listserv.critpath.org or rclary@projectinform.org.