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New House Bill Would Increase Access to Colorectal Cancer Screenings and Treatment for the Uninsured and Underinsured

Legislation Could Help Save Thousands of Lives

WASHINGTON – March 28, 2007 – U.S. Representatives Kay Granger (R-Texas) and Albert Wynn (D-Md.) today introduced legislation that would increase access to colorectal screening and treatment services to medically underserved men and women who would not otherwise be able to obtain them.

The lawmakers announced the legislation at an event marking National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. They were joined by U.S. Olympic gold medal swimmer Dara Torres and a coalition of public health and advocacy organizations including the American Cancer Society Cancer Action NetworkSM (ACS CAN), the Cancer Research Prevention Foundation (CRPF), the Colorectal Cancer Coalition (C3) and Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America (Hadassah). Ms. Torres' father succumbed to colon cancer in the past year.

The Colorectal Cancer Early Detection, Prevention and Treatment Act (H.R. 1738) would establish a program administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and would authorize \$50 million in funding for grants to the states. The grants would be used to conduct programs to provide vital colon cancer screenings, information and follow-up services to those ages 50-64, with a focus on those most at risk, such as low-income, uninsured and underinsured men and women. The bill is backed by ACS CAN, CRPF, C3 and Hadassah, all of whom support efforts to develop colon cancer screening and treatment programs for the medically underserved.

“The recent report of the drop in colon cancer deaths due to prevention and early detection shows that testing save lives,” said ACS CAN president Daniel E. Smith. “Still, we must do more to help the

uninsured and underinsured stop this disease before it starts. This legislation would enable them to get the early detection screening and treatment services so desperately needed to reduce the colon cancer burden. We thank Reps. Granger and Wynn for their leadership on this issue and urge the House to pass this lifesaving bill.”

According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 153,760 Americans will be diagnosed with colon cancer and an estimated 52,180 will die from this disease, making it the third most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Disparities play a significant role in these staggering statistics, as being uninsured often impedes access to colon cancer screening tests, which would detect the disease at an earlier, more treatable stage or even prevent it before it starts.

“The Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation is a proud supporter of this comprehensive legislation that provides access to screening for all men and women, regardless of their ability to pay. This bill will help us further reduce deaths from colorectal cancer through prevention and early detection, an approach to attacking cancer that our Foundation has long espoused,” said Carolyn R. Aldigé, President and Founder of the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation. “And we are especially pleased to partner with Olympian Dara Torres, who has made a personal commitment to raising awareness and ensuring access to screening.”

Building on lessons learned from the CDC’s successful National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, the Colorectal Cancer Early Detection, Prevention and Treatment Act would provide greater flexibility to reach the uninsured, minorities and other medically underserved men and women disproportionately affected by the disease.

“With 52,000 Americans expected to die from colorectal cancer in 2007 alone; it is vital that we begin to properly invest in research, prevention and treatment in order to save lives,” said Carlea Bauman, Executive Director of C3: The Colorectal Cancer Coalition. “Colorectal cancer patients have been neglected for too long, but through legislation like this, we will see progress against this terrible disease.”

The bill also requires grantees to provide the full range of cancer care, including follow up of abnormal tests, access to diagnostic and therapeutic colonoscopy and treatment for detected cancers. As a result, the program will boost testing rates, reduce colorectal cancer disparities and save lives.

“As an organization that conducts its own cutting-edge research at the Hadassah Medical organization in Jerusalem, we strongly believe that policy should follow science,” said June Walker, national president, Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. “Researchers have developed screening methods for colorectal cancer, which is eminently treatable and survivable when caught early. Now it is time for our public policy to ensure that all Americans have access to these lifesaving tools. We strongly support this legislation.”

ACS CAN is the nonprofit, nonpartisan sister advocacy organization of the American Cancer Society. ACS CAN is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major public health problem through issue campaigns and voter education aimed at lawmakers and candidates to support laws and policies that will help people fight cancer. ACS CAN does not endorse candidates and is not a political action committee (PAC). For more information, visit www.acscan.org.

The Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation was started in 1985 when Founder and President Carolyn Aldigé first understood the power of prevention to defeat cancer - and recognized that too few of the country's resources were used to promote cancer prevention research or education. Today, it is one of the nation's leading health organizations and has catapulted cancer prevention to prominence. Since its inception the Foundation has provided more than \$88 million in support of cancer prevention and early detection research and education programs.

C3: Colorectal Cancer Coalition is a national organization whose mission is to eliminate suffering and death due to colon and rectal cancer through advocacy. C3® pushes for research to improve screening, diagnosis, and treatment of colorectal cancer; for policy decisions that make the most effective colon and rectal cancer prevention and treatment available to all; and for increased awareness that colorectal cancer is preventable, treatable, and beatable.

Founded in 1912, Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America is the largest women's, largest Zionist, and largest Jewish membership organization in the United States. In Israel, it supports medical care and research, education, and youth institutions, and reforestation and parks projects. In the US, Hadassah promotes health education, social action and advocacy, volunteerism, Jewish education and research, Young Judaea and connections with Israel. For more information, please check out our Web site at www.hadassah.org

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