

TO: ATS Advocacy Network
FR: Nuala Moore
RE: Domestic Tuberculosis Legislation
DT: 9/19/07

Action Requested:
Contact Your Senators to Urge Support for Domestic TB Legislation

For maximum effectiveness, please contact your two Senators by September 26th.

The domestic TB control bill, the Comprehensive TB Elimination Act, S. 1551, sponsored by Sens. Brown (D-OH) and Hutchison (R-TX), is advancing in the Senate. The bill is due to be considered by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee in early October, however, Senators must hear from constituents about the need for the bill to ensure that it is scheduled for action. All ATS members and friends are urged to contact their two Senators to request their cosponsorship of the bill to ensure that it passes through the Senate HELP Committee and proceeds to a Senate floor vote.

The following is a list of the members of the Senate HELP Committee. **If your Senator is on this list, please make a special effort to contact them to request that they support a HELP Committee vote on the bill as soon as possible.** Names in bold indicate Senators that are already bill cosponsors, so please thank these Senators for their support and urge them to push the bill to a Senate floor vote.

Members of the Senate Health, Ed., Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee

Democrats

Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Chair

Chris Dodd (D-CT)

Tom Harkin (D-IA)

Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)

Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)

Patty Murray (D-WA)

Jack Reed (D-RI)

Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY)

Barack Obama (D-IL)

Sherrod Brown (D-OH-bill sponsor)

Independent - Bernard Sanders

Republicans

Michael Enzi (R-WY), Rnk. Mem.

Judd Gregg (R-NH)

Lamar Alexander (R-TN)

Richard Burr (R-NC)

Johnny Isakson (R-GA)

Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

Orrin Hatch (R-UT)

Pat Roberts (R-KS)

Wayne Allard (R-CO)

Tom Coburn (R-OK)

How to Take Action

Call the Capitol Switchboard at 1-202-224-3121 and ask for your Senator or give your state if you do not know their name. When you are connected to an office, ask for the Health Legislative Assistant. If you leave a voicemail message, include your name and phone number so that they can call you back.

The following is a sample phone message: “ I am a constituent and a healthcare provider from (your town) and I am calling to ask Sen. ___ to cosponsor the Comprehensive TB Elimination Act, S. 1551, and urge that the Senate HELP Committee vote on the bill as soon as possible. The bill must be passed this year to strengthen domestic TB control efforts to prevent outbreaks of drug resistant TB and expand research to find easier, more effective TB diagnostics, drugs and vaccines.”

Click on the following link to e-mail your Representative if you are unable to make a phone call:<http://www.thoracic.org/sections/about-ats/advocacy/take-action-now.html>

Other Talking Points:

- TB is the one of the leading infectious disease killers in the world, taking over 1.6 million lives per year.
- Ten to 14 million people in the U.S. are infected with latent tuberculosis.
- The current funding level for CDC’s Division of TB Elimination represents a 33% decrease over the past decade when adjusted for inflation.
- New tools are needed to more effectively prevent, diagnose, and treat TB. The standard method of diagnosing TB is over 100 years old and fails to adequately detect TB in children and those co-infected with HIV/AIDS.
- The newest class of TB drugs is over 40 years old and is inadequate for combating drug resistant TB.
- Passage of S. 1551 is needed to prevent outbreaks of extensively drug-resistant (XDR) TB, a virtually untreatable, and highly fatal strain of drug-resistant TB.

Summary of the Comprehensive TB Elimination Act, S. 1551/H.R. 1532

The bill, sponsored by Reps. Green (D-TX), Wilson (R-NM) & Baldwin (D-WI) and Sens. Brown (D-OH), Hutchison (R-TX) and Kennedy (D-MA) will increase funds for the CDC’s National Program for the Elimination of Tuberculosis, including funding for state TB control programs, and expand research on TB diagnostic and treatment tools at the NIH and CDC. The bill will also:

- Authorize and expand CDC demonstration activities on TB elimination, including targeted efforts to prevent, detect and treat the disease among African Americans and foreign-born persons in the U.S.
- Expand research, including study of the relationship between TB and HIV/AIDS, and TB professional training programs at the NIH
- Authorize funding for development of a new TB vaccine at NIAID

Sample letter:

As a constituent and health provider in your district, I am contacting you to urge you to help eliminate tuberculosis (TB) in the U.S. by cosponsoring the Comprehensive TB Elimination Act, S. 1551, sponsored by Sens. Brown (D-OH) and Hutchison (R-TX).

In the U.S., many people think TB is a disease of the past, however, the recent incident involving a drug resistant TB patient in the U.S. reminds us that we face new challenge in controlling this disease. Drug-resistant strains of TB are spreading globally, raising concerns of a future epidemic of virtually untreatable TB.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), although the overall rate of new TB cases is declining in the U.S., the annual rate of decrease in TB cases has slowed significantly, from about 7.1 percent (1993 to 2000) to 3.8 percent currently. This rate represents one of the smallest declines since the devastating resurgence of TB between 1985 and 1992, when over \$1 billion was expended in New York City alone to regain control of TB.

New tools are needed to more effectively prevent, diagnose, and treat TB. The standard method of diagnosing TB is over 100 years old and fails to adequately detect TB in children and those co-infected with HIV/AIDS. The newest class of anti-TB drugs is over 40 years old, while the rate of multi-drug resistance is rising.

The U.S. stands on the brink of being able to eliminate TB in the U.S. and the first step in reaching this goal is enactment of the Comprehensive TB Elimination Act, S. 1551. The bill will provide increased funding for the CDC's National Program for the Elimination of Tuberculosis. It will expand research on TB diagnostic and treatment tools at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and CDC, and authorize the "Blueprint Plan for TB Vaccine Development" at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).