



12/5/08 TB ADVOCACY UPDATE!

We have been asked to pass on this ACTION ALERT from **STOP TB USA** Partner, the American Thoracic Society:

ACTION ALERT - Your Action Needed to Increase Funding for TB!

Contact Your Members of Congress to Urge Support for Full TB Funding in the FY09 Appropriations Bill. Members of the House and Senate Appropriations committees will be finalizing the fiscal year 2009 spending bill for health services, called the Labor-Health and Human Services (Labor-HHS) Appropriations bill, in January 2009. **It is critical that TB advocates educate members of Congress, particularly members of the Labor-HHS subcommittee, about domestic TB control needs prior to this. Please contact your members of Congress by December 15.**

The Comprehensive TB Elimination Act (CTEA) was enacted into law on October 13, 2008. This historic law reauthorizes our national TB elimination program and provides a reinvestment into new TB diagnostic, treatment and prevention tools at the CDC and NIH. Specifically, the bill authorizes an increased funding level of \$200 million in FY09 for domestic TB control (up from \$140 million in FY08). Members of the appropriations committee's will make the final decision on whether to actually appropriate this amount in the FY09 Labor-HHS bill.

Draft FY09 Labor-HHS bills were passed by the committees in July. The draft House bill included \$147 million, a 5% increase, for the TB program. The Senate bill, however, level-funded the program at \$140 million. **Although these draft numbers and budget caps may preclude appropriation of the "full funding" level of \$200 million, members of the appropriations committee may be able to increase the funding level over \$147, if they get a strong push from state TB advocates. In any case, it is important that members of Congress are educated about the numbers in the CTEA as this will strengthen the case for FY10 full funding. Members of the House and Senate appropriations committees are the key targets for this effort, and you can also ask noncommittee members to support the effort by asking their colleagues on the committee to support the TB community's request.**

How to Take Action

Please contact your members of Congress to urge their support for full funding for TB control, as authorized under the Comprehensive TB Elimination Act. Call the Capitol Switchboard at 1-202-224-3121 and ask for your Sen/Rep. or give your zip code if you do not know their name. When you are connected to an office, ask for the Appropriations/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/Rep. _____ to strengthen domestic TB elimination programs and spur the development of new TB diagnostic, treatment and prevention tools by

increasing funding for CDC's TB program, as authorized under the recently enacted Comprehensive TB Elimination Act, in the FY09 Labor-Health and Human Services Appropriations bill. We understand that pre-existing budget caps may preclude an appropriation of \$200 million, as authorized under the bill, but we hope that you can support a funding increase over the FY08 level that is as close to the \$200 million as possible." **(Supplement your message with your state TB facts such as number of drug resistant cases).**

Talking Points:

- TB is the one of the leading infectious disease killers in the world, taking over 1.7 million lives per year.
- The 2006 case of the drug resistant TB patient who traveled between the U.S. and Europe, illustrated that the U.S. is vulnerable to drug resistant TB.
- The current funding level for CDC's Division of TB Elimination represents a more than 20% decrease over the past decade when adjusted for inflation. As a result of the lack of funding, state
- TB programs are ill-equipped to respond to drug resistant TB and to eliminate TB in their states.
- 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.
- The appropriation of full funding for CDC's TB program, as authorized under the Comprehensive TB Elimination Act, will ensure that the U.S. is equipped to respond to drug resistant TB and will provide a reinvestment in TB research to find faster, easier and more effective diagnostics, drugs and vaccines to control TB.

Please contact the ATS Washington Office if you have any questions and to let us know when you have contacted your members of Congress by e-mailing Nmoore@thoracic.org.