

Rep. Keith Ellison cosponsors legislation addressing the Alzheimer crisis

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The Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota commends Rep. Keith Ellison for cosponsoring both the "Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act" {S. 1492/ H.R. 3286} and the "National Alzheimer's Project Act," {S. 3036/H.R. 4689}. For the more than 5 million people nationwide living with Alzheimer's, and the 97,760 living right here in Minnesota, supporting these important bills is a significant step in the fight against the disease and offers great promise for someday having a world without Alzheimer's.

With an aging baby boomer population soon to be at the epicenter of an escalating Alzheimer crisis, the disease will become the country's biggest, broadest and most expensive problem – to individuals, families, and the healthcare system. According to the Alzheimer's Association's 2010 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report, total healthcare costs are more than three times higher for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias than for other people the same age without the disease. For the last several years, federal funding for Alzheimer research has declined in real terms. In fact, for every \$25,000 the government spends on care for people with Alzheimer's and dementia, it spends only \$100 for Alzheimer research. The Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act authorizes a significant increase in funding for Alzheimer research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to \$2 billion to increase momentum in the pursuit of better diagnosis, prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

Today there is no one government entity whose sole purpose is to mount a full campaign against Alzheimer's disease. The National Alzheimer's Project Act would make strides in confronting the crisis. Building on the recommendations offered by the Alzheimer's Study Group (ASG), an independent, bipartisan panel created to evaluate the government's current efforts to combat the disease, this legislation creates a National Alzheimer's Project Office at the Department of Health and Human Services and an inter-agency Advisory Council that is responsible for creating a national plan to confront the escalating crisis. Drawing on the expertise residing in various government agencies as well as individuals living with the disease, caregivers, providers and other stakeholders, this office would provide strategic planning and coordination for the fight against Alzheimer's across the federal government as a whole.

"The Alzheimer's Association commends Rep. Keith Ellison for his recognition of the growing threat of Alzheimer's," said Mary Birchard, Executive Director of the Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter. "Supporting the Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act and the National Alzheimer's Project Act, Rep. Ellison signals his understanding of the grave threat Alzheimer's poses to the nation. With 5.3 million people living with the disease and 11 million people caring for them – nearly 17 million people touched by Alzheimer's – it only underscores the urgency for action."