

Support Federal Legislation to Fight Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases!

Dear Minnesotans and Fellow Citizens,

Last year, the “Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases Prevention, Education and Research Act of 2009” was formally introduced in both the U.S. House and Senate (as H.R. 1179 and S. 1352, respectively). The passage of this groundbreaking legislation is critical to promoting the accurate diagnosis, proper treatment, prevention, and adequate education of both physicians and the public about Lyme and other tick-borne disease. These goals are especially important here, as Minnesota ranks 8th and Wisconsin ranks 7th in the nation for Lyme disease.

Currently, diagnostic testing is inadequate, missing 44-56% of patients. As a result, too many patients become debilitated and unable to lead productive lives as they go undiagnosed and untreated. At the same time, many physicians rely on practice guidelines that are one-sided and which base their treatment recommendations on flawed research. This has caused some physicians to take a narrow view, defining illness in strict terms and limiting treatment options. Given the alarming prevalence of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases here, it is absolutely critical that we support efforts to develop accurate testing, expose physicians and the public to unbiased research studies and a diversity of opinion, and step up our efforts at prevention. Below are just a few of the basics about this important piece of legislation, which is aimed at each of these goals.

The Lyme & Tick-Borne Diseases Bill: The Basics of a Crucial Initiative

- ***Establishes a Tick-Borne Diseases Advisory Committee.*** This committee would: (1) address tick-borne diseases with other Federal agencies and private organizations, including Lyme disease organizations; (2) advise government agencies on priorities concerning tick-borne diseases, and (3) ensure that a broad spectrum of scientific viewpoints is represented in public health policy decisions regarding both acute and chronic tick-borne diseases, and that information given to physicians and the public is balanced.
- ***Addresses The Problems of Inaccurate Testing and Underreporting*** by encouraging the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to develop more accurate diagnostic testing for Lyme disease, and to improve the surveillance and reporting of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases (i.e., by looking for better ways to more accurately determine the presence of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases). The development of better diagnostic testing would be a research priority.
- ***Increases Lyme Disease Prevention Efforts.*** The bill would aid in the prevention of Lyme disease through community-based public education, the creation of a physician education program, and scientific conferences that would include the full spectrum of scientific research and clinical experience.
- ***Authorizes Appropriations of \$100 Million for Disease Prevention, Treatment Research, Improved Diagnostic Testing and Surveillance, and Balanced Education.*** Appropriations of \$20 million are authorized for each of 5 years. The money would support disease prevention efforts, promote unbiased treatment research, help develop more accurate diagnostic testing, improve reporting and surveillance, and create balanced physician and public education programs.

We need your help to pass this legislation! Please contact your federal representatives and ask them to support H.R. 1179 and S. 1352 today! For more information about the bill or for sample letters, we invite you to visit www.mlascg.com. Thank you in advance for your support.

With Sincere Gratitude,

The Minnesota Lyme Action Support Group