



Funding for Health Care Reform and CDC's Viral Hepatitis Program are in Jeopardy

**YOUR REPRESENTATIVE MUST HEAR THESE TWO SIMPLE MESSAGES NOW:
SUPPORT FUNDING FOR HEALTH REFORM
SUPPORT FUNDING FOR VIRAL HEPATITIS**

Next week your Representative will be back in your district during what is called the *Constituent Work Week*. For the most part, your Representative will be in your district for a week every month this year to hear from constituents like you. This is your best chance to reach your Representative and tell them how important it is that they support funding for health reform and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's viral hepatitis program.

Currently the House of Representatives is debating a spending bill that will fund government programs through the end of the current fiscal year on September 30. Many Representatives are using this spending bill as a vehicle to defund health reform and public health programs including viral hepatitis. These cuts may lower the 2011 overall budget numbers but will impact people with hepatitis B and C and increase the costs of care and treatment for thousands of people who have chronic hepatitis.

How You Can Help

Whether your Representative is a Democrat or Republican, your Representative will listen to you because you are their constituent. More importantly, we are hearing that it is vital that **you tell your story about what funding cuts would mean to you.**

Call the Capitol Switchboard toll-free at 1-888-876-6242 and ask to be connected to your Representative. If you do not know who your Representative is, simply give the operator your zip code and/or address and you will be connected to their office. When you reach your Representative's office, tell the person who answers the phone that you are a constituent and that you would like to speak to the staff person who handles health care issues. Whether you speak to the staff person live or leave a voicemail, tell him/her:

"My name is _____ and I live in (city/state). I am calling to urge Representative _____ to vote against any attempts to take funding away from

implementing the Affordable Care Act and to vote against any attempts to take funding away from viral hepatitis. Taking away funds for health reform and viral hepatitis would impact me because _____.”

If you need help crafting your message or personal story, please contact [Colin Schwartz](#) or [Corinna Dan](#).

Thank you for taking the time to make a difference! Please spread the word.

Background Information

Health Reform

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), landmark health care reform legislation signed into law last year, has great potential to improve the lives of people living with and at risk for hepatitis B and/or hepatitis C. Starting in 2014, many low-income, uninsured people will be able to get health care and treatment through an expanded Medicaid program and those with higher incomes now have access to private insurance because the ACA eliminated the ‘pre-existing conditions’ clauses enabling everyone to access health insurance regardless of their health status. The benefits of the ACA are only just beginning but will increase over the next few years, helping more people with hepatitis B and C to get the care and treatments they need.

However, this legislation is under attack by Republicans in the House of Representatives who want to repeal the bill and deny millions of uninsured people the chance to have regular health care. Even though their efforts to fully repeal the legislation failed in the Senate, they are now attempting to block funding in this year’s spending bill for activities to implement health reform. Without this funding, implementation could become stalled – meaning it will be even longer before people in need get care and treatment to stay healthy and productive. Your help is needed this week to defend against this latest attack on health reform!

CDC Viral Hepatitis Funding

The House of Representatives has started the FY2011 Appropriations process to fund the remainder of the fiscal year. It is crucial that funding for viral hepatitis prevention and control be protected from possible cuts. The only dedicated funding for viral hepatitis is for the Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). DVH only received \$19.3 million in FY2010 and is the least funded infectious disease Division within CDC. We have a roadmap of how to federally invest in the most strategic way to combat these epidemics with the Division’s Professional Judgment budget (PJ), the Institute of Medicine’s viral hepatitis report and the HHS Viral Hepatitis Action Plan. Adequate and sustained funding is needed to realize the Division’s goals of a national testing, education and surveillance initiative as established in its PJ. The current funding level does not allow for the provision of core

prevention services which are desperately needed to control this costly and burgeoning epidemic. We have the tools to prevent hepatitis B and C, to effectively treat hepatitis B and we can even cure hepatitis C, especially with upcoming new treatments. However, without adequate funding, we cannot combat these costly epidemics.

The Burden of Viral Hepatitis

Liver cancer, one of the most lethal, expensive and fastest growing cancers in America, is primarily caused by viral hepatitis. Nearly 5.4 million Americans are infected with viral hepatitis – roughly six times the number of Americans with HIV – and 65-75 percent are not aware of their infections. Liver cancer and disease caused by viral hepatitis kills 15,000 people each year and is the leading cause of death in Americans living with HIV - nearly 25 percent of HIV-positive Americans are also infected with hepatitis C and nearly 10 percent with hepatitis B. In 2007 alone, the CDC estimated that 43,000 Americans were newly infected with hepatitis B and 17,000 with hepatitis C. These epidemics are particularly alarming given rising rates of new infections and high rates of chronic infection among disproportionately impacted racial and ethnic populations. It is estimated that one in ten Asian Americans are chronically infected with hepatitis B, especially those from high endemic countries (Asia and sub-Saharan Africa). African Americans are two to three times more likely to be infected with hepatitis C than Caucasian Americans. Further, the baby boomer population currently accounts for two out of every three cases of chronic hepatitis C. As they age onto Medicare and are more likely to develop complications from hepatitis C, medical costs are expected to increase from \$30 billion to over \$85 billion in 2024.