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Legislation creates Tick-Borne Diseases Advisory Committee

Senators Chris Dodd (D-CT), Chuck Hagel (R-NE), and Chuck Schumer (D-NY) today introduced legislation to expand federal efforts to fight Lyme disease. The Lyme and Tick-borne Disease Prevention, Education and Research Act of 2007 would create an Advisory Committee to better fight Lyme disease, and would provide \$20 million per year for research, education, prevention, and treatment of this often debilitating disease.

“As the summertime brings about warm weather and school vacation, we often face higher rates of infection of Lyme disease in residents of Connecticut and across the nation,” said Dodd. “Americans deserve to have the information they need to better protect themselves against this dangerous disease, and I believe this legislation will provide the necessary increase in research and coordination in order to prevent more cases of Lyme disease.”

“Lyme disease is a rapidly emerging infectious disease, affecting thousands of Americans every year throughout all regions of the country. It is critical to increase the public’s awareness of the health threats posed by this disease. My son, Ziller, was infected by Lyme disease a couple of years ago. It was very serious and painful for him and it took months for him to recover. This legislation would significantly strengthen and coordinate federal research efforts to prevent and help treat Lyme and other tick-borne diseases,” Hagel said.

“Lyme disease is a problem we’ve seen for decades, but we haven’t done nearly enough at the federal level to tackle it,” Schumer said. “Funding research for a disease that impacts millions of Americans should not be a Herculean task. The time is now to substantially increase federal funding for research, educating families, treatment, and promoting prevention. I know first hand that we need to better educate the public about how to avoid and treat this potentially serious disease.”

The Lyme and Tick-borne Disease Prevention, Education and Research Act of 2007 would make significant strides toward reducing Lyme disease incidence rates across the nation and funds research to better understand Lyme disease. The legislation will establish an Advisory Committee to ensure better coordination between federal and private agencies in combating Lyme disease. Additionally, the bill will require the Health and Human Services Secretary to submit a report to Congress containing updates on all activities related to surveillance, diagnosis, treatment, education, and prevention of Lyme disease; it will also address the progress of promoting public awareness.