

Lobby Day 2008

Talking Points: Kennedy-Hutchison Cancer Legislation

The Kennedy-Hutchison bill will reignite the war against cancer by:

- Making a greater investment in cancer research, particularly translational research, so new discoveries and breakthroughs in the laboratory make their way to patients' bedsides as quickly as possible. The bill will also streamline the research process by promoting public-private partnerships, and encouraging collaboration between scientists.
- Placing an emphasis on early detection, and promoting the discovery and development of biomarkers to detect cancers at the earliest possible stage, as well as personalized treatments, so early detection can be as easy as a blood test and treatment as non-invasive as an injection.
- Improving access to cancer care for underserved populations by, among other things, addressing the shortage of cancer care professionals (oncologists, doctors and nurses) and expanding access to clinical trials. After all, the new technology will be of limited use if only those with means can afford them.

THE ASK: Can we count on your support for the forthcoming Kennedy-Hutchison comprehensive cancer legislation and your commitment to getting this vital legislation to the president's desk this year?

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Background on Kennedy-Hutchison

- Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) are developing bipartisan comprehensive cancer legislation — with the help of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Advocacy Alliance and other cancer groups — that will redouble our efforts in the war against cancer.
- The Kennedy-Hutchison legislation is being drafted and is expected to be introduced in the Senate this summer. The Senators are working with House leadership to identify sponsors of a House companion bill, which bill may be introduced at a later time.
- Many are aware of Senator Kennedy's medical condition. Senator Kennedy maintains his commitment to the legislation and will have a key role.
- The legislation is an opportunity for the cancer advocacy community to come together behind a comprehensive cancer approach. Past attempts at dealing with this crisis were often impeded by the competing cancer interests.

Key Points about Kennedy-Hutchison

While the legislative language of the forthcoming Kennedy-Hutchison bill has not been finalized, we know several top line items that will be at the heart of the bill:

Making a greater investment in cancer research

- Today, the federal government invests about \$5 billion in cancer research each year (about \$850 million on breast cancer), a drop in the bucket for a disease that costs the U.S. more than \$219 billion in medical costs and lost productivity. When funding is adjusted to reflect biomedical inflation, the National Cancer Institute's FY2009 budget represents a loss in purchasing power of 19 percent, or \$1 billion, compared with 2003.
- The U.S. cannot invigorate cutting edge science and maintain its status as the global leader in biomedical research without adequate funding.
- Our inadequate investment in cancer means fewer new research grants are funded, valuable programs are downsized or eliminated, translation of new discoveries to patients' bedsides is

slowed and promising young researchers move to other fields or even other countries — with major implications for our future national competitiveness.

Placing an Emphasis on Early Detection

- Timely mammography screening of women over age 40 could reduce mortality by 20 to 35 percent; moreover, the five-year survival rate for women with early-stage breast cancer is 98 percent; for women with distant metastatic disease, the figure plummets to 27 percent.
- Early detection of prostate and colon cancers is similarly beneficial for patients: the 5-year survival for colon cancer is 90 percent when detected early, and the 5-year survival rate for prostate cancer approaches 100 percent due to early diagnosis and improvements in treatment.
- For many other cancers there are no early detection methods. Ovarian cancer is a particularly devastating example: there is no screening test, thus a diagnosis is most often made after the cancer has spread when a symptomatic patient presents to her physician. According to the American Cancer Society, when ovarian cancer is detected locally, the survival rate is 92 percent; however, only 19 percent of cases are detected at this stage, and the overall five-year survival rate is only 45 percent. Survival rates are even more disturbing for lung and pancreatic cancers.
- The next generation of cancer research is often referred to as “personalized medicine.” It is based on the search for targets, or biomarkers, for detection, therapy and prevention. Diagnostic tools and treatments can then be tailored to an individual person or tumor based on genetic traits, which will allow for treatments that are more targeted and therefore less painful and less toxic.

Improving Access to Cancer Care for Underserved Populations

- As the science surges, the gaps in mortality rates will only widen if we do not address issues of access. We must reduce the number of Americans who are uninsured, but we must also examine the adequacy of the insurance people have. Many Americans don't have access to the early detection tools and treatment options available today — 47 million Americans are uninsured, and uninsured cancer patients are 60 percent more likely to die than people with health insurance.
- Additionally, Congress should fully fund programs that provide care for underserved populations, such as the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, which provides breast and cervical cancer screening for underserved women. This program should be fully funded and replicated for other cancers with solid screening techniques.
- Congress should also support programs that will aid cancer patients, including the Patient Navigator Outreach and Chronic Disease Prevention Act of 2005, which has yet to be funded.

Key Facts About Cancer for Use in Your Meetings

- Forty percent of Americans will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lives.
- 1.4 million new cases of cancer will be diagnosed this year alone. Cancer will claim more than 565,000 American lives this year — about 1,500 people a day.
- Currently, there are about 10.8 million cancer survivors alive in the United States today.
- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) estimates the annual costs of cancer to be \$219 billion; today, the federal government invests about \$5 billion in cancer research each year (about \$850 million on breast cancer).

Key Facts About Breast Cancer for Use in Your Meetings

- Except for skin cancers, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among women; breast cancer is second only to lung cancer in cancer deaths among women.
- An estimated 182,460 new cases of invasive breast cancer are expected to occur among women in the United States during 2008; an estimated 40,480 women and 450 men will die from breast cancer this year.
- One woman is diagnosed with breast cancer every three minutes, and one woman will die of breast cancer every 13 minutes in the United States.