

Join the Tuberculosis Elimination Caucus

From: The Honorable Eliot L. Engel

Date: 3/14/2012

Support the Fight Against TB!

Join the TB Elimination Caucus

Dear Colleague:

Tuberculosis (TB) is the second leading infectious disease killer in the world, killing 1.4 million people per year. It is the third leading cause of death for women of reproductive age and has orphaned nearly 10 million children around the world. Challenges to halting the TB epidemic include antiquated TB diagnostic, treatment and prevention tools and the spread of drug resistant TB. Recently, physicians in India confirmed the existence of a strain of TB that is resistant to all TB drugs. The continued TB pandemic threatens to undo much of the progress made by the U.S. investment in the fight against HIV/AIDS through PEPFAR, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Here in the U.S., all states continue to record caseloads of TB. In the border states of California, Texas, Florida and New York, TB remains a serious public health problem. Drug resistant TB poses a particular challenge to domestic TB control due to drug shortages and exorbitant treatment costs, which range from \$100,000 to \$300,000 per patient.

Recently, the WHO released data showing that globally, both the numbers of people infected with TB and of people dying from the disease are falling. These findings show that U.S. leadership and funding of global tuberculosis control programs has resulted in saving lives.

Recent advances have been made in TB diagnostics with the availability of a new test that detects TB, including TB in HIV-infected people, in 90 minutes. We cannot defeat TB without the introduction of faster drug susceptibility tests and new TB drugs and vaccines. Continued U.S. leadership is crucial to building on the progress we have made against TB.

Because of the nature of this airborne infectious disease, we cannot afford to be complacent and reduce U.S. support. The Lantos-Hyde Global HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria Act of 2008 provided a historic U.S. commitment to global TB control through its support for the Global Plan to Stop TB. The Global Plan estimates that 5 million lives can be saved if appropriate funding is invested in TB control and prevention over the next five years. TB programs supported by USAID, the Global Fund and CDC have made enormous progress in combating TB globally and working to eliminate the disease in the U.S. Continued U.S. leadership is crucial to building on the progress we have made against TB.

Please join us in the fight to eliminate TB by joining the Tuberculosis Elimination Caucus. To join, contact Heidi Ross with Rep. Eliot Engel at Heidi.Ross@mail.house.gov or 5-2464, Nathaniel Tipton with Rep. Green at Nathaniel.Tipton@mail.house.gov or 5-1688 or Paul Milotte with Rep. Young at Paul.Milotte@mail.house.gov or 5-5765.

Sincerely,

Eliot L. Engel

Gene Green

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