



House Passes Autism Bill

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WASHINGTON, DC – Last night, the U.S. House of Representatives approved H.R. 2005, "The Combating Autism Reauthorization Act," a bipartisan bill authored by Congressman Chris Smith (NJ-04) and Rep. Mike Doyle (PA-14). This measure would renew the nation's programs for autism early detection, surveillance, research, education, awareness and treatment.

"I'm here today with my friend and co-chair of the Autism Caucus Congressman Smith to say how pleased we are that the House passed the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act yesterday on a voice vote," Doyle said. **"Over a million individuals are living with Autism Spectrum Disorders, and when you add in their families and caretakers, millions of Americans are affected by ASD."**

"The Combating Autism Act, which was approved five years ago, provided funding for research related to autism spectrum disorder, early identification of autism, and promoting early intervention," Congressman Doyle added.

"The Combating Autism Act has made a huge difference in the lives of thousands of autistic Americans and their families. And while we have made important progress in research on autism within the past few years, much remains to learn about the risk factors and causes of this group of conditions. Consequently, it's critical that Congress reauthorize the Combating Autism Act."

"Getting the legislation through the House was the first critical step and I am grateful that both Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Cantor support the bill and the work that has been done at the federal level to help families with autism," said Smith, whose own state of New Jersey is believed to have the highest rate of autism in the country. **"I have spoken to some on the Senate side who have raised concerns and I am optimistic that these critical programs will be reauthorized and advanced."**

The new legislation reauthorizes the Combating Autism Act (CAA) of 2006, which expires at the end of this month. The Combating Autism Reauthorization Act would authorize the CAA programs NIH, CDC, and HRSA for an additional three years, through September 30, 2014.

The bill passed unanimously in a voice vote, and must now be considered by the Senate.

"With the Combating Autism Act authorization expiring next week, it is essential that the Senate act this week to pass legislation to reauthorize the Combating Autism Act – and I encourage my Senate colleagues to do so," Congressman Doyle added.

CARE has consistently worked to increase federal support for autism initiatives, including autism programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health and the Health Resources and Services Administration.

Smith and Doyle are co-chairs of the bipartisan Congressional Coalition on Autism Research and Education (CARE).

"As a result of increased awareness of the public, of educators, and of health care professionals, the median age for diagnosis of autism – which currently is about 4.5 years—appears to be on the decline," Smith said. **"However, it is important to continue our efforts, as there is still on average a 2 year time gap from developmental concerns to actual diagnosis, research has demonstrated the positive impact of implementing behavioral intervention before age 3, and Applied Behavioral Analysis has shown significant improvement for children as young as 18 months."**

"I want to thank my friend and Autism Caucus co-chair, Congressman Mike Doyle, for his work in developing and supporting this legislation," Smith said.

In January 2011, a report required by the CAA, cosponsored by Smith and Doyle, described federal action undertaken since enactment of the CAA –mostly in the areas of research and services. The report describes autism-related research and service activities carried out by the federal government since enactment of the Combating Autism Act four years ago. It was released by the Dept. of Health and Human Services and the NIH.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that one out of every 110 children in the United States has an autism spectrum disorder. Currently, approximately 1.5 million individuals in the U.S. are on the autism spectrum. The range and severity of symptoms of autism vary from case to case, but symptoms often include difficulties in communicating and interacting with other individuals and exhibiting repetitive behaviors and intense interests in specific subjects.

Click [here](#) to read the text of H.R. 2005, The Combating Autism Reauthorization Act.

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