

## House Passes Smith's Autism Bill

**Washington, Sep 20** - The House of Representatives today debated and passed H.R. 2005, "[The Combating Autism Reauthorization Act](#)," a bipartisan bill authored by Congressman Chris Smith (NJ-04) that will renew the nation's programs for autism early detection, surveillance, research, education, awareness and treatment.

**"This legislation is critically important to continue without interruption the progress we have made in understanding autism and in developing interventions that will have the greatest impact in helping individuals affected by autism or another developmental disability,"** said Smith, whose own state of New Jersey is believed to have the highest rate of autism in the country. **"When I first got elected to Congress in 1980, the community accepted that autism prevalence rates in the United States were 3 in 10,000. Today, it is estimated to be 1 in 110, and in some places like New Jersey, 1 in 94 – for a total of 1.5 million individuals in the United States and autism is on the rise everywhere."**

Smith and Rep. Mike Doyle (PA-14), the prime cosponsor of the measure, are co-chairs of the bipartisan Coalition on Autism Research and Education (CARE). The new legislation reauthorizes the Combating Autism Act (CAA) of 2006. The reauthorization of CAA would be for an additional three years, through September 30, 2014.

The bill passed unanimously in a voice vote, and now awaits Senate passage. Smith said the bill will continue the success of the CAA of 2006 by authorizing funding for programs at NIH, CDC, and HRSA for three additional years.

**"I want to thank our Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Cantor, as well as Energy and Commerce Chairman Upton, Health Subcommittee Chairman Pitts for the leadership that have shown in moving this legislation forward,"** Smith said. **"I also would like to thank my friend and autism caucus co-chair, Congressman Mike Doyle, for his work in developing and supporting this legislation."**

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.

**"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."**

Smith's [Autism Statistics, Surveillance, Research and Epidemiology Act \(Title I, P.L. 106-310\)](#) recently marked its own 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The law authorized grants and contracts for the collection, analysis, and reporting of data on autism and pervasive developmental disabilities, and established regional centers of excellence in autism surveillance and epidemiology.

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.