

**Written Testimony of One Voice Against Cancer to the Labor-Health and Human Services  
Appropriations Subcommittee Regarding FY 2007 Cancer and Nursing Related Funding  
March 30, 2006**

One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC) appreciates the opportunity to submit written comments for the record regarding funding for cancer programs for research, prevention, detection, and treatment as well as programs that educate and train nurses in fiscal year (FY) 2007 at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). OVAC is a collaboration of more than 40 major national organizations representing millions of Americans affected by cancer, unified to urge Congress and the White House to increase cancer-related appropriations. OVAC stands ready to work with policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure that these important cancer and nursing initiatives at NIH, CDC, and HRSA receive adequate funding in FY 2007.

Our nation's prior investments in cancer research-related programs have saved thousands of lives and accelerated our progress toward the Administration's goal of eliminating death and suffering due to cancer by the year 2015. However, the challenge remains - cancer will strike one of every two men and one of every three women in the United States. This year alone, more than 1.4 million men and women in this country will receive the devastating news that they have cancer; yet, more than 10 million cancer survivors can attest to the fact that we are making real progress against this disease.

The Congress took a bold step forward in 1998 when it promised to double the budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) within five years. By keeping that promise, Congress opened the floodgates to countless new opportunities and advances in cancer research and programs. Thanks to the advances spawned by that infusion of support for biomedical research, cancer survivorship rates have steadily increased each year. For the first time since 1930, the number of cancer deaths in the U.S. decreased in 2003. Congress must maintain that promise with a stable and reasonable level of funding increases to sustain the momentum of this exciting research. Since FY 2003, NIH funding levels have fallen far short of keeping pace with inflation alone, and FY 2006 resulted in a hard cut to both NIH and National Cancer Institute funding levels.

Less funding translates immediately into fewer discoveries, fewer new drugs in development, and fewer new treatments reaching patients. We cannot reach the 2015 goal without the continued support of the Congress. We appreciate that our nation faces many challenges and Congress has limited resources to allocate. However, the conquest of cancer and elimination of health disparities is truly within our grasp. Making cancer a national priority will save millions of lives, reduce untold suffering, and save the nation billions of dollars in healthcare costs now and for the foreseeable future. The investment is surely worth it.

**Sustain and Seize Cancer Research Opportunities**

The tremendous investment our nation has made in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has reaped remarkable returns and set the table for a period of unparalleled innovation in the fight against cancer and other diseases. For FY 2007, OVAC joins with the broader public health community and urges Congress to provide \$29.7 billion for the NIH, a \$1.4 billion increase over FY 2006. This is the minimal level of funding that will allow the NIH to maintain the current pace of discovery and innovation.

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OVAC recognizes the fiscal challenges facing policymakers, but does not believe that those challenges require us to weaken our national commitment to conquering cancer. While the long-term goal of providing adequate funding to explore the most promising opportunities must remain paramount, for FY 2007, OVAC urges Congress to provide the National Cancer Institute (NCI) with at least \$5.034 billion, a \$240 million increase over FY 2006. This level of funding is the bare minimum required to protect our cancer research enterprise and maintain the current pace of discovery.

While a minimal increase of \$240 million will maintain current programs, it is not sufficient to allow us to move forward with advances that we know are possible. For fiscal year (FY) 2007, OVAC would recommend an increase closer to that of the professional judgment budget prepared by the NCI Director. This budget, which calls for \$5.9 billion for FY 2007, represents our national battle plan against cancer, outlining the critical core research that is currently underway and the most promising and extraordinary research opportunities. These exceptional research opportunities include expansion of the NCI-designated cancer centers program from 60 to 75 centers; implementation of the plan to reengineer cancer clinical trials for greater standardization, speed, and efficiency; construction of linkages between science and the new technologies of advanced imaging, proteomics, and computational modeling; expansion of the use of medical informatics and bioinformatics to cancer-specific applications; and development of an integrative site-based approach to cancer research through interdisciplinary team science and collaboration. The professional judgment budget is developed through an open and public process; it reflects the best thinking of cancer researchers, patients, clinicians, and other constituency groups and is focused on the Institute's goal of eliminating suffering and death from cancer by the year 2015.

The National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) was created by Congress to help address the undue burden of chronic and acute disease, morbidity and mortality, and lower survival rates borne by racial and ethnic minority groups, rural populations and other medically underserved populations. OVAC urges the Congress to provide the NCMHD with \$200 million for FY 2007 to advance its critical work coordinating and advancing health disparities research across the NIH. OVAC seeks to ensure that NCMHD has the resources to develop and enhance initiatives aimed at reducing and ultimately eliminating disparities in many chronic diseases, including cancer. Having worked with Congress to establish the NCMHD, the members of OVAC are committed to seeing it fulfill its mission and achieve its goals and objectives.

**Boost Our Nation's Investment in Cancer Prevention, Early Detection, and Awareness**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) state-based cancer programs provide vital resources for cancer monitoring and surveillance, breast and cervical cancer screening, state cancer control planning and implementation, and awareness initiatives targeting skin, prostate, colon, ovarian and blood cancers. For FY 2007, OVAC requests the following funding levels for these proven programs:

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- National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program: \$50 million (+\$33 million) - The Comprehensive Cancer Control program provides grants and technical assistance to help states develop and implement plans addressing the cancers most significantly affecting their communities through prevention, early detection and treatment. OVAC's request will allow this program to help more states implement previously developed plans.
- National Program of Cancer Registries: \$65 million (+\$16.89 million) - The National Program of Cancer Registries facilitates state tracking of cancer trends and subsequent allocation of resources to address specific needs, while also identifying highly effective cancer control programs that can be emulated across the country. The registry provides critical data to ensure we remain on track in the fight against cancer. OVAC's request will enable states to continue to collect and analyze high-quality data as well as evaluate existing cancer prevention efforts.
- National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program: \$250 million (+\$47.57 million) - OVAC appreciates the Administration's longstanding commitment to this important program that provides free breast and cervical screening tests to low income and uninsured women. Unfortunately, millions of eligible women lack access to these critical tests due to lack of funding. The CDC estimates that the program currently only reaches 20 percent of eligible women aged 50 to 64. OVAC's funding request for FY 2007 would allow at least an additional 130,000 women to be served by the program.
- Colorectal Cancer Screening, Education & Outreach Initiative: \$25 million (+\$10.51 million) - Strong scientific evidence has shown that regular screening and treatment is a cost-effective way to reduce colorectal cancer incidence and mortality. However, screening rates for CRC are currently lower than for other cancer screening services. The Colorectal Cancer Screening, Education & Outreach Initiative helps increase public awareness of colorectal cancer, educate health care providers about colorectal screening guidelines and assist state programs with colorectal cancer priorities. With additional resources this program will be able to expand its awareness initiatives and reduce the number of preventable colorectal cancer deaths.
- National Skin Cancer Prevention Education Program: \$5 million (+\$2.93 million) - Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States and is largely preventable. OVAC's request will allow the program to educate the public about ways to protect themselves and reduce the risks of getting skin cancer.
- Prostate Cancer Control Initiatives: \$20 million (+6.07 million) - This initiative provides the public, with special emphasis on men and their physicians, with information about prostate cancer screening and early detection. OVAC's request will allow the program to expand and improve its outreach efforts.
- Ovarian Cancer Control Initiatives: \$7.5 million (+\$2.98 million) - The Ovarian Cancer Initiative partners with academic and medical institutions to spur discovery of techniques that will detect this cancer and develop more successful treatments. OVAC's request will

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increase public and professional awareness of the symptoms and best treatments for ovarian cancer, restoring hope to the more than 20,000 women who will be diagnosed with this devastating illness this year.

- Geraldine Ferraro Blood Cancer Program: \$5 million (+\$0.46 million) - Authorized under the Hematological Cancer Research Investment and Education Act of 2002, this program was created to provide public and patient education about blood cancers, including leukemia, lymphoma and myeloma. OVAC's request will allow the program to continue to provide patients with educational, disease management and survivorship resources to enhance treatment and prognosis.

**Securing and Maintaining an Adequate Oncology Nursing Workforce**

OVAC joins with the nursing community in asking Congress to provide \$175 million in FY 2007 for the Nurse Reinvestment Act and the other nursing workforce programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Over the next 15 years, the number of Medicare beneficiaries with cancer is expected to double, while more than 1.1 million nursing positions go unfilled. The critical role of nurses in our health care system cannot be overstated. Oncology nurses are on the front-lines of the provision of quality care for cancer patients and are vital to administering chemotherapy, managing patient treatments and side-effects and providing counseling to patients and family members.

Without an adequate supply of nurses, there will not be enough qualified oncology nurses to provide quality, comprehensive cancer care to a growing patient population in need. Nurses are also vital to helping conduct cancer research through clinical trials, and a shortage will slow down the pace of medical research progress. These programs will help address the multiple factors contributing to the nationwide nursing shortage, including the decline in student enrollments, shortage of faculty and poor public perception of nursing as a viable and worthwhile profession.

**Conclusion**

OVAC stands ready to work with policymakers to ensure that funding for cancer research and related programs is a top priority in FY 2007 and beyond. We thank you for this opportunity to discuss the funding levels necessary to ensure that our nation continues to make gains in our fight against cancer and has a sufficient nursing workforce to care for the patients with cancer of today and tomorrow.

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**Submitted on behalf of One Voice Against Cancer:**

Daniel E. Smith  
National Vice President, Federal and State Government Relations  
American Cancer Society  
901 E Street, NW  
Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20004  
(202) 661-5700  
info@ovaonline.org