



April 10, 2003

*Sent to Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committee
House of Representatives / U.S. Senate
Washington, DC*

Dear <Member's Name>:

One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC), a collaboration of more than 40 public interest groups representing the millions of Americans impacted by cancer, was formed to unify the cancer community and present a cohesive message to the Administration and Congress regarding the funding levels necessary to defeat cancer. We are writing to urge you to make cancer research and its application a priority during consideration of the fiscal year 2004 (FY04) Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (LHHS) Appropriations bill.

Congress has shown exemplary leadership in mounting an aggressive war on cancer, as demonstrated by the significant investment in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget over the past five years. We have been pleased to work with you to secure the necessary funding for NIH, the National Cancer Institute (NCI), National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Your continued support and leadership is critical to our shared goal of eradicating this disease.

Dr. Andrew von Eschenbach, Director of the NCI, was recently asked by *The New York Times* to give a "2003 State of the Union for cancer research and treatment." In reply, Dr. von Eschenbach noted, "we are at a moment when the huge investment in research that began in 1971 with President Nixon's war on cancer, is beginning to pay dividends. That investment has helped us to understand the disease. The next challenge is not to just gather information, but to integrate it and bring it into the clinics. All this new knowledge is opening doors for us to be able to intervene in ways we never could."

Despite the advances mentioned by Dr. von Eschenbach, cancer remains one of the nation's most urgent health care concerns. This year, more than 1.3 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer and more than 556,500 will die from the disease.

Therefore, we encourage you to devote the resources needed to benefit those on the front lines battling cancer – the researchers and health professionals striving every day to defeat cancer, the person without access to adequate cancer screening or care, and the family with a loved-one who has been newly diagnosed with the disease. Research holds the key to improved prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, and subsequent follow up care. To complement our nation's ongoing investment in research, increased funding also is needed to enhance vital cancer prevention, awareness, and early detection programs at the CDC to ensure that these advancements in research benefit all Americans.

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OVAC asks that you include the following funding levels in the FY04 LHHS Appropriations Bill (a summary is attached):

National Institutes of Health: \$29.6 billion

OVAC wishes to thank members of the Committee for your commitment to increasing the budget at NIH over the past five years. This investment in medical research will prove beneficial to those affected by many diseases, including cancer. Unfortunately, the President's FY04 Budget Request included only a 2% increase for NIH. We join other concerned voices in asking the Committee to exceed this figure to ensure that both existing and new, cutting edge research will be continued in FY04 and beyond.

We ask that the NIH budget be increased to \$29.6 billion in FY04, which is consistent with the 8.5% increases recommended by Senator Arlen Specter after completion of the NIH doubling effort. Such an increase will allow NIH to sustain and build on its research progress resulting from the doubling effort while avoiding the severe disruption to that progress that would result from a minimal increase.

National Cancer Institute: \$5.9 billion

We have seen extraordinary advances in cancer research resulting from our national investment that have produced effective prevention, early detection and treatment methods for many cancers. But there has been little to no progress for many types of childhood cancers including neuroblastoma IV, brain stem tumors, and metastatic bone cancers. We still lack life-saving screening and treatment tools for rare cancers, such as lymphoma, myeloma, pancreatic, and kidney cancers, as well as some forms of leukemia.

OVAC asks the Committee to allocate \$5.9 billion for NCI in FY04 as recommended by the NCI Director in the Bypass Budget submitted to Congress annually under the requirements of the National Cancer Act of 1971. The Bypass Budget represents the best estimation of the scientific community regarding the resources needed to continue our battle against cancer.

NCI is currently able to fund only about a quarter of its approved grants. Every unfunded grant represents a missed opportunity. Funding NCI at the level recommended in the Bypass Budget will increase the number of approved grants that can go forward to develop the next breakthroughs in the prevention, detection, and treatment of cancer, offering hope to the more than 1.3 million Americans who will be diagnosed with cancer this year, and the approximately 8.9 million people alive today who have had cancer or continue in their battle to conquer it.

National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities: \$200 million

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 and the medically underserved. OVAC asks that the Committee provide NCMHD with \$200 million in FY04 to advance its critical work coordinating and advancing health disparities research across the NIH. Providing NCMHD with this strong foundation will enable researchers to more rapidly expand our growing knowledge about health disparities so we can develop and enhance initiatives geared to reduce and ultimately eliminate disparities in many chronic diseases, including cancer.

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This funding will allow NCMHD to expand on the number of ongoing research grants in underserved areas with researchers who innately understand the needs of special populations, allowing them to share best practices and decrease health disparities.

Division of Cancer Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: \$364 million.

CDC's education, outreach, prevention and screening services are another critical component in conquering cancer because these programs bring our research advances into the lives of all people to help prevent premature death from cancer. For FY04, OVAC asks the committee to provide \$364 million for seven proven CDC cancer programs:

1. The National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program: The Comprehensive Cancer Control Program provides grants and technical assistance to states to assist local public health departments in addressing the cancers most significantly affecting their communities through prevention, early detection and treatment. OVAC requests \$20 million for the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program in FY04.
2. The National Program of Cancer Registries: 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 so they can be emulated across the country. OVAC requests \$60 million in FY04 funding for this program to ensure that states have registries that can collect and use high-quality data.

The CDC also operates effective programs providing community outreach, education, and awareness focused on colorectal, prostate, skin and ovarian cancers as well as life-saving screening services for breast and cervical cancers. These programs are specifically geared to address the undue burden of these cancers in medically underserved populations. OVAC asks for increases in the following programs to expand these services, reach more people in these affected populations, and save lives:

3. The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program: The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program provides screening and treatment for low-income women with little or no health insurance. The program has been extremely successful, but because of limited resources, it currently reaches only about 18% of all eligible women. OVAC asks the Committee to provide \$220 million for this program in FY04 to expand the reach of this life-saving program.
4. Colorectal Cancer Prevention and Control Initiatives: Early diagnosis and treatment of colorectal cancer results in a survival rate of greater than 90%. Despite this, people are not getting screened and colorectal cancer remains the second leading cause of cancer deaths in America. CDC's Colorectal Cancer Control Initiative educates the public and providers about the benefits of screening and early detection to raise awareness and reduce the number of preventable deaths from this disease. Providing the Colorectal Cancer Control Initiative with \$25 million in FY04 will enable the program to expand its awareness initiatives and reduce the death toll of colorectal cancer.

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5. The National Skin Cancer Prevention Education Program: Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States and is largely preventable by taking steps to reduce sun exposure. CDC's Skin Cancer Prevention Program is designed to educate the public, with a specific focus on young people, about ways to protect themselves and reduce the risks of getting skin cancer. With \$10 million in FY04, CDC can improve and expand its educational efforts to reduce the incidence of this preventable disease.

6. Prostate Cancer Control Initiatives: CDC's Prostate Cancer Control Initiative provides the public, with special emphasis on men and their physicians, with information about prostate cancer screening and early detection. OVAC requests \$20 million in FY04 for the Prostate Cancer Control Initiative to expand and improve its outreach and education activities.

7. Ovarian Cancer Control Initiatives: Ovarian cancer still lacks screening tools or treatments that can be applied to effectively improve survival. CDC's Ovarian Cancer Initiative partners with academic and medical institutions to spur discovery of techniques that will detect this cancer earlier and develop more successful treatments to cure it. OVAC requests funding of \$9 million in FY04 to achieve progress against this deadly cancer and restore hope to the 25,400 women who will be diagnosed with this devastating illness this year.

We realize the difficult decisions you face due to the challenging fiscal climate and constraints placed on the budget resulting from the war overseas and homeland security needs. But the battle against cancer is ongoing – with more than 1,500 Americans dying from cancer every day. OVAC believes our requests represent the best effort to conquer cancer, and we make them on behalf of the millions of cancer survivors, patients and families touched by cancer that we represent. Thank you for your past support and your continued consideration. Please contact any of the organizations listed below for more information.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Cancer Society
American Foundation for Urologic Disease
American Society of Hematology
American Urological Association
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of American Cancer Institutes
Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation of America
Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation
Colon Cancer Alliance
Eyes on the Prize
Intercultural Cancer Council Caucus
International Myeloma Foundation
Kidney Cancer Association
The Lance Armstrong Foundation

The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
Men's Health Network
National Alliance for Hispanic Health
National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations (NABCO)
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition
Society of Gynecologic Oncologists
The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation
Trust for America's Health
Us Too! International