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STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH IN RECOGNITION OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH

HON. CHRIS SMITH OF NEW JERSEY

Madame Speaker,

Today, I had the honor to speak at a briefing on Alzheimer's disease and the important work of the National Institute on Aging (NIA), National Institutes of Health, in providing leadership on research and treatments for patients with Alzheimer's. In addition to the NIA, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, Alliance for Aging Research, Leaders Engaged on Alzheimer's Disease, USAgainst Alzheimer's, and the National Collaborative on Aging participated in the briefing.

November is National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month, and the briefing today provided an important contribution to increasing awareness in Congress. I fondly recall that President Ronald Reagan designated the first National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness week in 1982, 12 years

before he announced that he had been diagnosed with the disease.

Alzheimer's disease is now the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. Estimates vary, but it is believed that over 5 million individuals have Alzheimer's and someone new develops the disease every 70 seconds. One in eight persons over 65 and nearly half of those over 85 has Alzheimer's. In my own state of New Jersey, 150,000 residents are suffering from Alzheimer's.

With the aging of the 78 million American baby-boomers, by 2050, 16 million will have the disease if advances are not made to prevent it.

In 2009, 11 million family caregivers provided the equivalent of \$144 billion in care. And Alzheimer's costs to Medicare and Medicaid last year were \$123 billion.

When I was first elected to Congress in 1980, diagnosis of Alzheimer's was about three million cases, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) invested only \$13 million in Alzheimer research. This year, NIH will invest \$469 million in baseline funding for Alzheimer's research. While we have made progress in federal support, we know that much more needs to be done to conquer this terrible disease.

In 1999, I joined Congressman Markey in founding the Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's to help increase congressional awareness and legislative efforts relative to Alzheimer's. The Task Force which now includes 158 Members of the House of Representatives, hosts briefings and forums for Members of Congress and their staffs and works closely with the Alzheimer's Foundation of America and the Alzheimer's Association, which has a New Jersey affiliate.

We are working here in the House and with our colleagues in the Senate to pass this year **The National Alzheimer's Project Act (or NAPA), legislation designed to better coordinate research and clinical programs dealing with Alzheimer's disease all across the federal bureaucratic spectrum. NAPA currently has 109 cosponsors.**

As I mentioned earlier, by 2050, nearly 16 million Americans will have Alzheimer's, yet there is no national plan to deal with this looming crisis. The **National Alzheimer's Project Act (NAPA)**, which has been modified since its introduction in February of this year, establishes in the Office of the Secretary of HHS a National Alzheimer's Project. It also will establish an inter-agency advisory council to advise the Secretary of HHS and address the

government's efforts on Alzheimer's research, care, institutional services, and home- and community-based programs.

The Alzheimer's Project will:

- create and maintain an integrated national plan to overcome Alzheimer's;
- accelerate the development of treatments that would prevent, halt, or reverse the course of Alzheimer's;
- help to coordinate the health care and treatment of citizens with Alzheimer's;
- ensure that ethnic and racial populations -- who are at higher risk for Alzheimer's or least likely to receive care -- are included in clinical, research, and service efforts;
- coordinate with international bodies to integrate and inform the fight against Alzheimer's globally;
- and provide information and coordination of Alzheimer's research and services across all Federal agencies.

I would like to commend the Alzheimer's Foundation and the Alzheimer's Association for their work and support to advance this legislation. As you know, such strong advocacy often makes the difference in pushing legislation over the finish line. While I am extremely disappointed that the Senate HELP Committee cancelled their mark-up yesterday that was to include NAPA, we will work with them to try to ensure that it is marked-up and passed this year.

In addition to introducing and fighting to pass NAPA, Rep. Markey and I have introduced two other major bills focusing on Alzheimer's:

On July 29, 2010, we introduced **the HOPE for Alzheimer's: Health Outcomes, Planning and Education Act (H.R. 5926)**. The bill would provide for Medicare coverage of comprehensive Alzheimer's disease and other dementia diagnoses and services in order to improve care and outcomes for Americans living with the disease. The HOPE Act aims to increase detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias and provide access, information and support for newly diagnosed patients and their families.

The Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act (HR 3286), which was introduced in July 2009 and has 136 cosponsors, authorizes the necessary resources to restore momentum in the pursuit of better diagnosis, prevention and treatment. Advances and progress in the various areas of Alzheimer research

have the potential to save millions of lives and save hundreds of billions of dollars.

Also, earlier this year we sent a letter, along with House and Senate colleagues, to

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretary Sebelius to have Alzheimer's included in the in the Healthy People 2020 initiative. The Healthy People initiative provides 10-year national objectives for promoting health and preventing disease.

I am gratified to work alongside Congressman Markey and the other members of the bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease to address this oncoming public health tsunami – and hopefully to see prevention and a cure before it totally overwhelms our nation's health care resources.