

WASHINGTON (16 May) - U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) today joined thousands of potential bone marrow donors by registering with the National Marrow Donor Program. In the hopes that one day his own bone marrow will help save a life, Congressman Bilirakis participated in the Washington, DC leg of the DRIVING FOR DONORS tour across the country.

Organized by a young Palm Harbor resident, Pat Pedraja, 12, who was diagnosed with Leukemia in March 2006, DRIVING FOR DONORS is seeking to add 5,000 new names to the National Marrow Registry Program by the end of this year.

Like many of our nation's children who are afflicted with this disease, Pat may need a bone marrow transplant to save his life. Unfortunately, there is currently a shortage of bone marrow donors, especially for minorities. When Pat learned about this shortage, he decided to do something about it and organized DRIVING FOR DONORS.

"I am extremely honored to have such a brave and ambitious young man from my district taking up this noble cause," said Bilirakis. "Pat and his family are a testament to the tremendous impact and influence each of us can make for community and country. I am confident that this courageous young man will exceed his goal. I wish Pat and his family the best of luck in the future and encourage all Americans to register for this life-saving program."

###