

House Passes Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act

WASHINGTON (15 Oct.) -- The Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act (H.R. 1727) was passed today by the House of Representatives on a voice vote. The bill, authored by Congresswomen Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Mary Bono (R-CA) and Congressmen Jim Langevin (D-RI) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) will improve the lives of and hasten better treatments and cures for people living with paralysis.

"Passage of this legislation today is extremely gratifying," said Congresswoman Baldwin. "We honor the activism of Christopher and Dana Reeve with this bipartisan effort to better treat and, we hope, cure paralysis and other serious motor impairments. Chris and Dana used their visibility to work on behalf of families in all parts of the country who face the challenges of paralysis and impaired mobility. This legislation, passing just days after the third anniversary of Christopher Reeve's death, is part of their legacy," Baldwin said.

"The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation is extremely grateful to Representatives Tammy Baldwin, Mary Bono, James Langevin and Gus Bilirakis for sponsoring and spearheading this landmark legislation in Christopher and Dana Reeve's names," said Peter Wilderotter, President, Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation. "Improvements are made every day in spinal cord injury research, but the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act will help to quickly and efficiently stimulate even more progress. We at the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation also applaud Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Minority Leader John Boehner for moving quickly to pass this historic Act," Wilderotter said.

The legislation, named for the actor who was paralyzed in a riding accident and his wife who turned adversity into activism, seeks to avert redundancies and encourage collaborative research in paralysis and improving the quality of life for people living with paralysis and mobility impairments from any cause -- stroke, ALS, spinal cord injuries, and others.

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"I am very pleased that the House has passed this important legislation that, in addition to addressing a serious issue, honors the memory of my friend, the late Dana Reeve, and also her late husband, Christopher. Both Dana and Christopher have been an inspiration to us all, and this legislation will instill hope in the many individuals and families dealing with the challenges of paralysis and mobility impairment," said Congresswoman Bono.

"I want to especially thank Reps. Baldwin, Bilirakis, and Langevin for their bipartisan efforts to move this legislation forward; it has been a pleasure to work with each of them," Bono said.

"I commend all those who worked so tirelessly to pass this bill that will help people with disabilities achieve and maintain their independence and ensure that we are using the best research and technology to help improve their quality of life," said Congressman Langevin, who is the only spinal cord injured Member of Congress. "On a personal note, Chris and Dana were dear friends and it is now up to all of us to move forward and continue their legacy by implementing this legislation," Langevin said.

"I am very proud to be an original cosponsor of this bill, which will encourage collaborative research in paralysis and hasten the discovery of treatments and potential cures to improve the lives of people with paralysis," said Congressman Bilirakis, who offered a bill with similar language earlier this year. "Chris and Dana Reeve pushed to the national forefront the issue of the need for better research into paralysis and greater emphasis on rehabilitation. Today's passage of H.R. 1727 is the culmination of their work, and the work of others pushing for greater awareness and action on this issue," Bilirakis said.

The Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act has three components that support and enhance paralysis research, rehabilitation, and quality of life programs:

- Paralysis Research - Expands research on paralysis at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This will encourage collaborative research by connecting scientists conducting similar work to further enhance understanding and speed discovery of better treatments and cures.

- Paralysis Rehabilitation and Care - Builds on research to enhance daily function for people with paralysis, including a Clinical Trials Network to measure effectiveness of certain rehabilitation tactics and encouraging shared findings on paralysis to improve rehabilitation.

- Improving Quality of Life for Persons with Paralysis and Other Physical Disabilities - Works with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to improve the quality of life and long-term health status of persons with paralysis and other physical disabilities.