

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2008

The Honorable Alan Mollohan
Chairman
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Appropriations Committee
H-310 Capitol
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Mollohan and Ranking Member Wolf:

We urge you to provide \$5 million in the FY 2011 CJS appropriations bill for the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program, a competitive grant program that helps local communities and law enforcement officials quickly identify persons with Alzheimer's disease who wander away from home and reunite them with their families.

More than 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, and the majority of them live at home under the care of family and friends. It is estimated that 60% of Alzheimer's patients are likely to wander away from their homes. Wanderers are vulnerable to dehydration, weather conditions, traffic hazards, and individuals who prey on vulnerable seniors. Up to 50% of wandering Alzheimer's patients will become seriously injured or die if they are not found within 24 hours of their departure from home.

Since its inception more than 10 years ago, the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program has funded a national registry of more than 172,000 individuals at risk of wandering and has reunited over 12,000 wanderers with their families. It is a highly successful program whereby 88% of registrants who wander are found within the first four hours of being reported missing. The program has a 98% success rate in recovering enrollees who are reported missing. In 2008, the program enrolled 5,086 individuals and provided assistance to 715 people.

Within the past year, the program has also begun to consider funding technology-based options to address wandering. For example, personalized wristbands that emit a tracking signal can be worn by individuals who are at risk of wandering. When caregivers notify local officials that an individual is missing, specially trained search and rescue teams conduct a search in the individual's area using a mobile tracking system. This technology can reduce search times from days or hours to minutes.

On February 10, 2009, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 908, the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program Reauthorization Act, by a voice vote. H.R. 908 authorizes \$5 million per year in appropriations for FY 2010 through FY 2016. We are hoping the Senate will act on this legislation this year.

The Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program protects the safety of thousands of Americans affected by Alzheimer's disease and provides priceless peace-of-mind to their families. It also saves local law enforcement officials valuable time and allows them to focus on other security concerns.

We therefore urge you to provide \$5 million for the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program in FY 2011. Families across the country are counting on your support for this small but effective program.

Sincerely,

Melanie Waters

Chris Smith

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