

# **Congressional Lyme Disease Task Force**

The bipartisan Congressional Lyme Disease Task Force, co-chaired by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Rep. Collin Peterson (D-MN), is dedicated to educating Members of Congress and staff about Lyme and other tick-borne diseases, as well as advancing initiatives that are designed to help the estimated 400,000 Americans who develop Lyme disease each year and all of those living with the disease.

Under the leadership of Congressmen Smith and Congressmen Peterson, the task force has initiated letters and actions to benefit Lyme patients, such as the inclusion of the monies for Lyme and tick-borne diseases into the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) and language and Lyme monies into Appropriations over the years and initiated favorable legislation. Additionally, it has queried government agencies over policies not favorable to patients. This has reminded the agencies that someone is looking over their shoulder. Many meetings have been held and educational sessions in DC for Congress.

As co-chairs of the bipartisan Task Force, Rep. Smith and Rep. Peterson lead annual appropriations requests in support of Lyme disease research through the Department of Health and Human Services and for research funding at the Department of Defense. In 2015, the caucus secured for the first time ever, \$5 million in funding in the House Appropriations Committee annual military spending legislation, which was adopted in the Fiscal Year 2016 funding bill which was signed into law, and will provide resources for Lyme disease research through DOD's innovative, high-risk, high-reward program.

Recently, the caucus secured another major win for Lyme disease. In December of 2016, the United States House of Representatives passed, and former-President Obama signed, the 21st Century Cures Act. The Cures Act included language – similar to a bill that Rep. Smith introduced previously – which created the Interagency Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Working Group. Specifically, Working Group comprised of federal and non-federal members tasked with reporting to Congress on scientific advances, research questions, surveillance activities and emerging strains in species of pathogenic organisms.

To join the caucus email [Marisa.Kovacs@mail.house.gov](mailto:Marisa.Kovacs@mail.house.gov) (Rep. Chris Smith) or [Tamir.Elnabarawy@mail.house.gov](mailto:Tamir.Elnabarawy@mail.house.gov) (Rep. Colin Peterson)