

# HEALTH LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

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The following pieces of legislation regarding health and minority populations may be relevant to readers of *Ethnicity & Disease*. Information on these bills was current when this issue went to press. We encourage readers to further investigate legislation of interest to their health disciplines.

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## HR 3503: LIFELONG IMPROVEMENTS IN FOOD AND EXERCISE (LIFE) ACT

Currently, 64.5% of adults in the United States, age 20 years and older, are overweight, and 30.5% are obese. Data from two National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys show that among adults aged 20–74 years, the prevalence of obesity increased from 15.0% in the 1976–1980 survey to 32.9% in the 2003–2004 survey. Many underlying factors have been

linked to the increase in obesity, such as increasing portion sizes; eating out more often; increased consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks; increasing television, computer, and electronic gaming time; changing labor markets; and fear of crime, which prevents outdoor exercise. More than 50% of adults in the United States do not get enough physical activity, and national data have shown an

increase in the calorie consumption of adults.

Adopting a healthy lifestyle such as eating nutritious foods and engaging in physical activity can prevent or control the devastating effects of chronic diseases. This bill would amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for a national program to conduct and support activities toward the goal of significantly

reducing the number of cases of overweight and obesity among individuals in the United States.

Sponsor: Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC)  
Introduced 9/7/2007  
Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

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## S 2173: FIT KIDS ACT

Of all US deaths from major chronic disease, 23% are linked to sedentary lifestyles that now begin at childhood. Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight adults, increasing their risk for chronic disease, disability, and death. In 2004, an estimated 9,900,000

children and adolescents aged 6–19 years were considered overweight. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that, by 2010, 20% of children and youth in the United States will be obese.

A decline in physical activity has contributed to the unprece-

dent epidemic of childhood obesity. Among children ages 9 to 13, 61.5% do not participate in any organized physical activity during out-of-school hours. This bill will amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to improve standards for physical education.

Sponsor: Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa)  
Introduced 10/17/2007  
Status: Referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

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## S 907: GEDI ACT

The prevalence of gestational diabetes among pregnant women in the United States is increasing. Gestational diabetes, which increases the risk of preeclampsia, also increases a pregnant woman's

risk for developing the condition in subsequent pregnancies. Improved nutrition and physical activity, both before and during pregnancy, may significantly decrease the rates of gestational

diabetes. This bill aims to lower the incidence of gestational diabetes and prevent women afflicted with this condition and their children from developing type 2 diabetes.

Sponsor: Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY)  
Introduced 3/15/2007  
Status: Referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

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