

HEALTH LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

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.

S 2983: DIABETES PREVENTION ACCESS AND CARE ACT OF 2008

This legislation would amend the Public Health Service Act to promote and improve the care of people with diabetes to reduce health disparities between ethnic minority groups, including the Africa American, Hispanic American, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and American Indian and Alaskan Native communities. The director of the National

Institutes of Health will expand, intensify, conduct, coordinate, and support research and other activities with respect to prediabetes and diabetes, particularly type 2, in minority populations, including research to identify clinical, socioeconomic, geographical, cultural, and organizational factors that contribute to type 2 diabetes in such populations.

Research will be conducted on behavior and obesity, environmental factors that may contribute to the increase in type 2 diabetes, new methods to identify environmental triggers and genetic interactions that lead to the development of type 1 and type 2 diabetes in minority newborns. This legislation also supports research to identify genes that predispose

people to type 1 and type 2 diabetes and research to prevent complications in people who have already developed diabetes.

Sponsor: Sen Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ)

Introduced 5/6/2008

Status: Referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

S 3468: NURSING AND ALLIED HEALTH EDUCATION PRESERVATION ACT OF 2008

The United States Census Bureau and other reports highlight the increased demand for acute and chronic healthcare services among both the general population and a rapidly growing aging portion of the population. The calls for reduction in medical errors, increased patient safety, and quality of care

have resulted in an amplified call for allied health professionals to provide healthcare services. Several allied health professions are characterized by workforce shortages, declining enrollments in allied health education programs, or a combination of both factors, and hospital officials have reported

vacancy rates in positions occupied by allied health professionals. Many allied health education programs are facing economic pressure that could force their closure because of an insufficient number of students. This legislation would help hospitals supply a needed workforce of nurses and allied health

professionals by preserving funding for hospital-operated nursing and allied health education programs.

Sponsor: Sen Charles E. Schumer (D-NY)

Introduced 9/10/2008

Status: Referred to the Committee on Finance.

S 2798: GLOBAL AUTISM ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2008

In February 2007, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released data indicating that the occurrence of autism-spectrum disorders in-

creased between 1996 and 2006 from an estimated 1 in 500 to an estimated 1 in 150. Autism is a complex neurologic disorder that affects people in the areas

of social interaction and communication. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, it affects each person differently and to varying degrees of severity. The in-

creased number of children diagnosed with autism is a growing and urgent concern for families, healthcare professionals, and educators. Health and

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education systems struggle to respond to the needs of the autistic population in a comprehensive manner. The prevalence of autism in developing countries is growing rapidly. Health and education systems in these countries are particularly poorly

equipped to deal with the issues surrounding this growth. According to expert estimates, $\approx 2,500,000$ people have an autism-spectrum disorder in China and $\approx 2,000,000$ in India. Early screening and services for autism are sorely lacking in most

of the developing world. United States expertise could be used to aid children and families in developing countries for relatively small costs. This bill would establish a health and education grant program related to autism-spectrum disorders.

Sponsor: Sen Norm Coleman (R-Minn)

Introduced 4/2/2008

Status: Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.