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House of Representatives

ON FINAL DEBATE AND VOTE ON PASSAGE OF MARKEY-SMITH BILL, THE NATIONAL ALZHEIMER'S PROJECT ACT - H.R. 4689

HON. CHRIS SMITH OF NEW JERSEY

Madam Speaker, as co-chairman along with my good friend and colleague Congressman Ed Markey of the Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's, which we founded back in 1999, and as lead Republican sponsor on the companion legislation – this is a Senate bill, of course – I rise in strong support and ask for our colleagues to pass the National Alzheimer's Project Act.

This legislation is an important step forward in our battle against the crisis of Alzheimer's disease. Unfortunately, we know that the trajectory of Alzheimer's disease over the next few decades threatens unparalleled tragedy and threatens to overwhelm society's ability to cope if something is not done to change the trajectory.

Alzheimer's disease is both a current and future health crisis of our Nation. About 78 million baby boomers were born between 1946 and 1964, which has been termed the single greatest demographic event in United States history. In a couple of weeks on January 1, the first of those boomers will turn 65 years of age.

Today, 5.3 million people have Alzheimer's, and another American develops the disease every 70 seconds. 200,000 Americans under the age of 65 have early onset Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's costs Medicare and Medicaid alone approximately \$122 billion. The average annual Medicare payment for an individual with Alzheimer's, as the previous speaker pointed out, is three times higher than for those without the condition. Additionally, 11 million unpaid caregivers provide 12.5 billion hours of care, valued at an estimated \$144 billion. This

unpaid care obviously is a huge drain on family resources.

Without effective intervention to change the trajectory, by mid-century, the number of individuals with Alzheimer's will increase to an estimated 13 million to 16 million people, and the cost to Medicare and Medicaid will be staggering, over \$800 billion in today's dollars. Given these realities, it is astounding that there is no national plan to address the crisis of Alzheimer's disease and the looming crisis.

The National Alzheimer's Project Act is designed to help turn the tide by creating a national strategic plan to address it. NAPA establishes an interagency advisory council to advise the Secretary of Health and Human Services on how to comprehensively address the government's efforts on Alzheimer's research, care, and service including both institutional and at-home care.

As a percentage of the population, more women than men have Alzheimer's, and African Americans are about two times more likely to have Alzheimer's or other dementias, yet they are less likely to be diagnosed. NAPA aims to address these disparities as well.

NAPA will provide the framework to accelerate the development of an efficacious care and comprehensive treatment in an effort to mitigate the unspeakable agony and suffering of millions of patients and their families, and if we are successful we will also save the country billions of dollars every year and trillions over the coming decades.

This is an outstanding bill and I hope the membership of this body will overwhelmingly support it.