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## Federal Help Coming For Lyme Disease

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The effort to improve treatment for Lyme disease and those that suffer from the illness has gotten some help from the federal government.

The House of Representatives last week approved an increase in the level of funding for research, allowing both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health to continue their efforts. The 2010 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education spending bill approved Friday puts the CDC's budget for Lyme disease research at \$8.9 million, an increase of more than \$3.6 million.

"Lyme is a serious and devastating disease," Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA-10) said. "I am hopeful that through increased education and awareness efforts about the threat of Lyme disease, we can help to ensure people living in high-risk areas know how to protect themselves and their children from ticks."

Wolf, who has been one of the leaders in the federal government on the issue of Lyme, sponsored the Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Prevention, Education and Research Act with Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ-4). While the House did not consider the legislation, it would have authorized \$100 million over five years to expand Lyme disease research and education.

The approved FY10 bill encourages the CDC to expand its activities related to developing more sensitive and more accurate diagnostic tools and tests for Lyme; to enhance its epidemiological research activities on tick-borne diseases to include an objective to determine the long-term course of illness for Lyme; to improve surveillance and reporting of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases; to evaluate the feasibility of developing a national reporting system on Lyme; and to expand prevention of tick-borne diseases through increased community-based public education and creating a physician-education program that includes the full spectrum of scientific research on the disease.

The bill also encourages NIH to ramp up its research on tick-borne diseases and "support research that may lead to the development of more sensitive and accurate diagnostic tests for Lyme disease." NIH also is called upon, with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, to sponsor a scientific conference on Lyme and other tick-borne diseases and the conference "should represent the broad spectrum of scientific views on Lyme disease and should provide a forum for public participation ... and input from individuals with Lyme disease."

The impacts of the research could be felt strongly in Loudoun, which has been called "ground zero" for Lyme disease cases. Forums held both this year at Rust Library and last year at the School Administration Building, that one sponsored by Wolf, drew hundreds of residents who have either been diagnosed with the disease or want to learn more about preventing their own infection.

Loudoun County Public Health Director, David Goodfriend, MD, has called Loudoun an epidemic area for Lyme, with many areas that are endemic to the deer tick, which is a carrier of Lyme disease. In recent years Loudoun has led the Northern Virginia region in Lyme disease cases. In 2007, there were 500 reported cases of the disease, a statistic Goodfriend has attributed to not just an increase in the number of infections, but an increased awareness and reporting by doctors. According to national statistics, Loudoun ranks third in the country for new Lyme disease cases, with 36 diagnosed per 100,000 people. Only Connecticut and Rhode Island have more new cases of Lyme. Virginia as a whole ranks seventh on the list, behind New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland, which rank fourth, fifth and sixth, respectively.

For more information on Lyme disease, visit [www.loudoun.gov/lyme](http://www.loudoun.gov/lyme).