

**UNITED STATES CONGRESS PASSES PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING MAY 9-16  
AS “NATIONAL HEPATITIS B AWARENESS WEEK”**

*—Pennsylvania Members lead call for Increased Education and Awareness for Chronic  
Hepatitis B in the United States —*

Doylestown, PA – May 5, 2005 – In an effort to increase education and awareness for chronic hepatitis B, a life-threatening disease that affects more than 1.25 million Americans, the United States Senate and House of Representatives have both passed resolutions designating May 9-16 as “National Hepatitis B Awareness Week.” Pennsylvania representatives Senator Rick Santorum and Congressman Tim Murphy led the initiative which was also supported by Senator Arlen Specter.

“Hepatitis B is the most common serious liver infection in the world,” said Senator Santorum. “This resolution will offer opportunities in Pennsylvania and across the country to educate the public about new treatments to prevent the transmission of this disease and its progression to liver cancer.” In the United States, more than one million people have developed chronic hepatitis B infection and more than 5,000 Americans die from hepatitis B and hepatitis B-related liver complications each year, including liver damage (cirrhosis) and liver cancer.

In honor of “National Hepatitis B Awareness Week,” the Hepatitis B Foundation are partnering with other active groups to host “AIM for the B: Awareness, Involvement and Mobilization for Chronic Hepatitis B,” a public education program designed to elevate the urgency around prioritizing the disease as a serious health issue in the United States. The program includes a series of local events held in four cities where hepatitis B prevalence is high—Philadelphia, New York, San Jose and San Francisco. During the events, local physicians, chronic hepatitis B patients and third-party organizations will gather to share their experiences with the disease, and discuss the importance of early diagnosis and treatment.

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Hepatitis B is the most common serious liver infection in the world. More than half a million people worldwide die each year from primary liver cancer, and up to 80 percent of primary liver cancers are caused by chronic hepatitis B. In the United States, the Department of Health and Human Services recently added hepatitis B to its list of known human carcinogens.

“The weapons to combat this disease are available, including vaccination, and early diagnosis and treatments,” Congressman Murphy noted, “during National Hepatitis B Awareness Week, events are going to be held across the United States that will help raise awareness for hepatitis B, and educate individuals and their physicians on the disease. By supporting a National Hepatitis B Awareness Week, Congress can draw the necessary attention to help stamp out this preventable disease.”

Despite alarming statistics, it is estimated that only a small percentage of patients are currently receiving treatment for the disease. Approximately 15 to 40 percent of chronically infected hepatitis B patients will develop liver damage (cirrhosis), liver failure or liver cancer. Of chronic hepatitis B patients who develop cirrhosis, almost half of them may die within five years because of the high risk of liver cancer associated with the progression of the disease.

As part of the “AIM for the B” local event held May 10, 2005, in Philadelphia, Asian-American patients chronically infected with the hepatitis B virus and physicians will speak on their personal experiences with the disease. In the United States, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans (API) make up more than half of the population chronically infected with the hepatitis B virus. As many as one in 10 APIs are infected with the disease. Depending on the country of origin, between five and 15 percent of API immigrants are chronically infected with the hepatitis B virus.

## **About the Hepatitis B Foundation**

The Hepatitis B Foundation is dedicated to finding a cure and improving the quality of life for those affected by hepatitis B through a comprehensive program of research, education, and patient advocacy. The organization is committed to raising funds for focused research, promoting disease awareness, supporting immunization and treatment initiatives, and serving as the primary source of hepatitis B information for patients and their families, the medical and scientific community, and the general public. Visit the Hepatitis B Foundation at [www.hepb.org](http://www.hepb.org).

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