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September 26, 2006

**Great Accomplishments have been made in Cancer Research  
Vote for HR 6164**

Dear Colleague,

Last week we were all visited by cancer survivors from our districts. For those of us serving on the Energy and Commerce Committee, we have also been discussing the future of NIH funding. Many of us find ourselves asking, 'Are we doing enough?' when perhaps our first question should be, 'Do we know what we've already done?'

*"This year, for the first time in history, the absolute number of cancer deaths in the U.S. has decreased. We now have ten million cancer survivors. We can detect and treat cancer at earlier stages. Targeted therapies have emerged, using specific molecular targeting to treat tumors with new agents. NIH's National Cancer Institute and others have identified biomarkers of cancer, foreshadowing an era when the disease can be predicted before symptoms appear, and treatment can be effectively targeted and personalized to the individual cancer patient."*

—Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D., Director, National Institutes of Health

The National Cancer Institute and the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), both part of the NIH, are currently collaborating on The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA). Thanks to the tools and technologies developed by the Human Genome Project, scientists can collaborate to determine whether it will be possible to develop a useful atlas of the changes in the human genetic blueprint associated with all types of cancer. TCGA will ultimately enable researchers throughout the world to analyze and employ the data to develop a new generation of targeted diagnostics, therapeutics, and preventives for all cancers, and pave the way for more personalized cancer medicine.

What does that mean? It means that we are well on our way to a time when, should you be diagnosed with cancer, your physician will be able to say whether or not certain therapeutics are appropriate for you based on the genes exhibited in your specific cancer. We are already moving in the right direction; all we need to do is keep moving.

Today you will have the opportunity to vote in favor of H.R. 6164, the NIH Reform Act of 2006. This bill makes important at the NIH and will improve the quantity and quality of cancer and general medical research. Vote for your constituents by voting for H.R. 6164.

Sincerely,

  
Michael C. Burgess, M.D.

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