

October 4, 2001

The Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Harkin and Specter:

The undersigned organizations, representing cancer patients, providers, and researchers, lend their strong support to the efforts of Congress and the President to respond swiftly and comprehensively to the tragic events of September 11. We understand that the Congressional agenda must be reordered and that action on a number of important issues may be postponed.

We applaud the intention of Congress to complete in timely fashion its work on FY 2002 appropriations measures. In the past, we have contacted you to express our enthusiastic support for the five-year initiative to double the budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Substantial increases in NIH funding will be necessary in both FY 2002 and FY 2003 to accomplish this worthy goal, and we encourage Congress to approve a boost in funding for 2002 that will sustain progress toward doubling the budget.

We recognize and appreciate that Congress currently faces many competing spending priorities. However, this is a time of particular promise in cancer research, as our knowledge of the molecular defects that cause cancer is improving dramatically. It is also an era of healthy collaboration between the private and public sectors to translate basic science findings into cancer treatments, including several that are more effective than traditional cancer therapies without their side effects. Progress in the fight against cancer will depend on a sustained effort from the federal government to train researchers, support investigator-initiated research, and facilitate the translation of basic research knowledge into medical treatments. The federal investment in cancer research has paid rich dividends in terms of development of more effective and less toxic cancer treatments, but much work remains to be done.

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We applaud your steadfast support of NIH. As you turn your attention to the FY 2002 appropriations bill, we would also like to remind you of the significant research challenges still facing us. A substantial increase in NIH funding -- of the magnitude necessary to remain on course to double the budget -- would be used wisely and productively by researchers and has the potential to make an important difference in the lives of individuals with cancer. On behalf of those with cancer and their caregivers, we urge you to continue progress toward doubling the NIH budget.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

Alliance for Lung Cancer Advocacy,
Support, and Education
American Cancer Society
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology
& Oncology, Inc.
Cancer Care, Inc.
Cancer Research Foundation of America
The Children's Cause, Inc.
Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups
International Myeloma Foundation

Kidney Cancer Association
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Prostate Cancer Coalition
North American Brain Tumor Coalition
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
The Wellness Community
US TOO! International, Inc.