

CANCER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

A PATIENT-CENTERED FORUM OF NATIONAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS
ADDRESSING PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IN CANCER

October 7, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

The undersigned organizations representing cancer patients, physicians, pharmacists, and researchers write to urge action to end the government shutdown without further delay. The federal government touches our work, lives, and families in countless ways, and the interruption of government programs and activities has had a serious effect on cancer survivors, those who care for them, and researchers. The furloughing of federal employees has disrupted many vital public-private collaborations in cancer research and care.

In 1971, this nation committed itself to a “war on cancer,” and Congress enacted the National Cancer Act. The central purpose of that law was to “enlarge the authorities of the National Cancer Institute and the National Institutes of Health in order to advance the national effort against cancer.” In the 42 years since approval of the National Cancer Act, we have realized that strengthening the national effort against cancer requires not only a vibrant National Cancer Institute and National Institutes of Health but also other, complementary efforts to advance our understanding of cancer and its causes and to improve treatments for cancer. We have also made a commitment over the last four decades to enhance the detection, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer, and to respond to the long-term needs of those who survive cancer.

Research to understand cancer and its causes and to translate basic research knowledge into new treatments depends on a biomedical research enterprise in which public and private sector researchers, including researchers from industry, collaborate, and research dollars from all sectors are used to maximum benefit. The development of new treatments also relies on a robust regulatory system for the review of new treatments to define the benefits and risks they offer cancer patients. The shutdown of

the federal government has meant an abrupt halt to many of these activities and called into question the reliability of the federal government as a research collaborator going forward.

There are currently almost 14 million Americans living with cancer, and another 1.6 million will join their ranks in 2013. Over the last four decades, public and private health care systems have provided care to cancer patients, and the federal government has played an especially important role in addressing health care disparities and improving the early detection of cancer. We have consistently made progress in preventing cancer, detecting and diagnosing cancer early, providing quality care from diagnosis, and caring for patients as they enter long-term survivorship. However, much remains to be done to guarantee every cancer patient care of the highest quality. Even the temporary closure of important federal health agencies has caused the public-private network for cancer care to be frayed, threatened the quality of the cancer care system, and called into question the networks of care that include federal partners.

On behalf of the millions of Americans living with cancer, those who provide care to them, and those who are dedicated to research to find treatments and cures, we urge you to act immediately to end the government shutdown.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society of Clinical Oncology
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
CancerCare
Cancer Support Community
The Children's Cause for Cancer Advocacy
College of American Pathologists
Fight Colorectal Cancer
Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association
International Myeloma Foundation
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
LIVESTRONG Foundation
Lymphoma Research Foundation
Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Comprehensive Cancer Network
National Lung Cancer Partnership
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Sarcoma Foundation of America
Susan G. Komen Advocacy Alliance
Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network