

Congress has acted on several issues that are important to oncology nurses and patients in the first few months of 2009, including the House of Representatives passing a bill to regulate tobacco and the Senate introducing comprehensive cancer legislation. Below are some early highlights of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.

The Family Smoking and Tobacco Control Act (HR 1256), passed the House 298-112 on April 2, 2009. One of the Society's top priorities is enactment of this bill that grants the Food and Drug Administration authority to regulate all tobacco products. The Administration has come out in support of this bill. ONS will continue to work with other health and community organizations to advocate for the passage of the Family Prevention and Tobacco Control Act this year.

On March 26, 2009, Senators Kennedy (D-MA) and Hutchison (R-TX) introduced the 21st Century Cancer Access to Life-Saving Early Detection, Research, and Treatment (ALERT) Act (S.717). The ALERT Act includes provisions that seek to improve the nation's efforts to defeat cancer, including increasing access to clinical trials by ensuring that Medicare and ERISA governed plans cover routine patient care costs for individuals while they are enrolled in clinical trials. The bill also increases access to tobacco cessation therapies for pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid.

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009 President Obama signed the fiscal year 2009 (FY09) Omnibus Appropriations Act into law. The U.S. House of Representatives approved the bill February 25 and the U.S. Senate approved it March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009 by voice vote.

Cancer related provisions of the Omnibus include:

- \$30.3 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an increase of \$938 million, or 3.2 percent
- \$4.96 billion of the NIH funding will go toward the National Cancer Institute, a \$133 million or 2.8 percent increase
- \$340.3 million for cancer programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) a \$31 million or 10 percent increase
- \$38.9 million of the CDC funds will go toward colorectal cancer screening, education and outreach, an increase of \$25 million that will act as a down payment of sorts for the eventual creation of a national community-based program for colorectal cancer screening and treatment

Nursing related provisions in the Omnibus includes a 9.6% increase in Nurse Reinvestment Act funding. The final total is \$171,301 million.

To learn more about ONS's health policy priorities or to contact your elected officials, please visit the ONS Legislative Action Center at [www.onslac.org](http://www.onslac.org).