

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 372

Designating March 2010 as “National Autoimmune Diseases Awareness Month” and supporting efforts to increase awareness of autoimmune diseases and increase funding for autoimmune disease research.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 8, 2009

Mr. LEVIN submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the
Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Designating March 2010 as “National Autoimmune Diseases Awareness Month” and supporting efforts to increase awareness of autoimmune diseases and increase funding for autoimmune disease research.

Whereas autoimmune diseases are chronic, disabling diseases in which underlying defects in the immune system lead the body to attack its own organs and tissues;

Whereas autoimmune diseases can affect any part of the body, including the blood, blood vessels, muscles, nervous system, gastrointestinal tract, endocrine glands, and multiple-organ systems, and can be life-threatening;

Whereas researchers have identified over 80 different autoimmune diseases, and suspect at least 40 additional diseases of qualifying as autoimmune diseases;

Whereas researchers have identified a close genetic relationship and a common pathway of disease that exists among autoimmune diseases, explaining the clustering of autoimmune diseases in individuals and families;

Whereas the family of autoimmune diseases is under-recognized, and poses a major health care challenge to the United States;

Whereas the National Institutes of Health (NIH) estimates that autoimmune diseases afflict up to 23,500,000 people in the United States, 75 percent of whom are women, and that the prevalence of autoimmune diseases is rising;

Whereas NIH estimates the annual direct health care costs associated with autoimmune diseases at more than \$100,000,000,000, with over 250,000 new diagnoses each year;

Whereas autoimmune diseases are among the top 10 leading causes of death in female children and adult women;

Whereas autoimmune diseases most often affect children and young adults, leading to a lifetime of disability;

Whereas diagnostic tests for most autoimmune diseases are not standardized, making autoimmune diseases very difficult to diagnose;

Whereas because autoimmune diseases are difficult to diagnose, treatment is often delayed, resulting in irreparable organ damage and unnecessary suffering;

Whereas the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies reported that the United States is behind other countries in research into immune system self-recognition, the cause of autoimmune diseases;

Whereas a study by the American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association revealed that it takes the average patient with an autoimmune disease more than 4 years, and costs more than \$50,000, to get a correct diagnosis;

Whereas there is a significant need for more collaboration and cross-fertilization of basic autoimmune research;

Whereas there is a significant need for research focusing on the etiology of all autoimmune-related diseases, in order to increase understanding of the root causes of these diseases rather than treating the symptoms after the disease has already had its destructive effect;

Whereas the National Coalition of Autoimmune Patient Groups is a coalition of national organizations focused on autoimmune diseases, working to consolidate the voices of patients with autoimmune diseases and to promote increased education, awareness, and research into all aspects of autoimmune diseases through a collaborative approach; and

Whereas designating March 2010 as “National Autoimmune Diseases Awareness Month” would help educate the public about autoimmune diseases and the need for research funding, accurate diagnosis, and effective treatments: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) designates March 2010 as “National Auto-
3 immune Diseases Awareness Month”;

4 (2) supports the efforts of health care providers
5 and autoimmune patient advocacy and education or-
6 ganizations to increase awareness of the causes of,
7 and treatments for, autoimmune diseases; and

1 (3) supports the goal of increasing Federal
2 funding for aggressive research to learn the root
3 causes of autoimmune diseases, as well as the best
4 diagnostic methods and treatments for people with
5 autoimmune diseases.

○