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**Local Cancer Survivors and Volunteers Traveled to Nation’s Capital to Urge Congress to Make Cancer a National Priority**

Volunteers Met with Maine Congressional Delegation to Ask for Support for Cancer Research and Prevention Funding and Patient Quality of Life

(Portland, Maine)– September 17, 2012 – Diane Mitchell of Rumford, Janet Miles of Livermore Falls, and Jeff Bennett of Portland traveledwith other cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers from all 50 states to Washington, D.C. last week. Mitchell, Miles, and Bennett met with Senator Snowe, Congresswoman Pingree, and staff from Senator Collins’ and Congressman Michaud’s offices to discuss the need to protect funding for cancer research and prevention and to co-sponsor legislation that supports patients’ quality of life.

The visit was part of the annual American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) Leadership Summit and Lobby Day, which brought more than 600 cancer survivors and volunteers from all 50 states and nearly every congressional district to Washington to call on Congress to take steps to make cancer a national priority.

“As someone who has lost more than 35 family members to cancer, I let Senators Snowe and Collins, and Representatives Pingree and Michaud know that federal funding for cancer research, prevention and early detection must be top priorities in the federal budget, along with efforts to improve the quality of life for cancer patients,” said Diane Mitchell. “By making these lifesaving programs a priority, we could ensure that progress continues in the fight against cancer.”

Specifically, the Maine volunteers asked their Members of Congress to:

* Protect funding for cancer research at the National Institutes of Health and National Cancer Institute.
* Protect funding for cancer prevention and screening programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Prevention and Public Health Fund.
* Co-sponsor legislation to improve the quality of life for cancer patients by providing patients with better access to palliative care services and coordinated care.

While in Washington, D.C., cancer advocates also attended trainings on communicating with elected officials, speaking with the media and engaging in grassroots activities in their communities. The three-day Lobby Day culminated Friday night with a Lights of Hope ceremony in front of the U.S. Capitol steps, with more than 3,000 lights spelling "HOPE." Each light represented cancer survivors as well as loved ones who have died from the disease.

“Nearly 1,500 people die every day in this country from cancer. We must continue to look forward to new successes in fighting the disease,” said cancer survivor Jeff Bennett. “Even in this tough economic climate, Congress should commit to protecting funds that make tests and treatments more effective, as well as support legislation that provides individuals with serious illnesses like cancer better coordinated care.

Federally funded medical research and cancer prevention programs have had a role in every major advance against this disease, resulting in 350 more lives saved from cancer per day than in 1991. Despite this progress, cancer continues to kill nearly 580,000 people in the United States each year. Additionally, roughly half of all cancer deaths in the U.S. could be prevented if people had access to effective prevention programs, avoided tobacco, maintained a healthy weight through diet and exercise and got recommended cancer screenings

Palliative care is a proven cost-effective way of improving the quality of patient care at any stage of diagnosis. Research shows that cancer patients come to expect pain and other symptoms as something they must endure. However, evidence based research has concluded that when patients have early access to palliative care services alongside curative treatment they have a better quality of life.

ACS CAN is the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate organization of the American Cancer Society, dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage lawmakers, candidates and government officials to support laws and policies that will make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer. For more information, visit [www.acscan.org](http://www.acscan.org/).

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