



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Toni Williams
202.638.8666
toni.williams@alz.org

RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

Alzheimer's Association Statement

Washington, D.C., Feb. 25, 2009 –In his first address to a joint session of Congress last night, President Obama laid out the significant challenges facing the nation – from a weakened economy, to rising unemployment, to increasing health care costs, acknowledging that “comprehensive health care reform is the best way to strengthen Medicare for years to come.”

The Alzheimer's Association believes one way to strengthen Medicare and save billions is to immediately confront the growing Alzheimer crisis. In 2011, the first wave of baby boomers begins turning 65 – which is not only the age of Medicare eligibility, it is also the age of greatest risk for developing Alzheimer's disease. There is no clearer, more predictable public health crisis facing the United States today that will directly impact Medicare and Medicaid than Alzheimer's. And yet no plan to deal with the crisis that will impact the lives of 10 million baby boomers.

In 2005, total Medicare costs for beneficiaries age 65 and older with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias amounted to an estimated \$91 billion; and state and federal Medicaid spending for nursing home care for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias was estimated at \$21 billion. With an aging baby boomer population, this escalating epidemic will continue to touch more lives and increase costs for Medicare and Medicaid. Experts predict that by 2030, Medicare spending on those individuals with Alzheimer's alone will cost nearly \$400 billion – nearly as much as today's *total* Medicare spending.

By 2010, nearly a half million new cases of Alzheimer's disease will develop each year and by 2050, a million new cases will develop per year. The nation's health and long-term care systems will be incapable of sustaining sufficient support for a baby boomer population where one in eight individuals will develop Alzheimer's or another dementia. For an already overtaxed health care system fraught with skyrocketing costs, the nation simply cannot afford to have an Alzheimer epidemic.

-more-

In these turbulent financial times, it is even *more* important to make sound fiscal decisions. In President Obama's speech last night he stated: "The answers to our problems don't lie beyond our reach." And he is correct. We have the opportunity to change the trajectory of this disease now. Today's scientific landscape is rich with a variety of possible disease-modifying treatments, but a shrinking investment in Alzheimer research threatens these breakthroughs. Investing in research to end Alzheimer's is one of the most prudent decisions that the government can make. It not only saves lives, it also saves money by reducing the burden on Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Leadership from the top is vital, but we all need a heightened level of commitment to address this crisis. America understands this – which is why over 60,000 Americans signed a call to action urging President Obama to make Alzheimer's a thing of the past.

We are delivering this call to action and our recommendations to President Obama on how best to address the escalating Alzheimer epidemic. These recommendations include developing a national strategy to address Alzheimer's and accelerating Alzheimer research. Alzheimer's disease is an issue that will require the collective effort, innovative ideas and collaborative spirit President Obama has implored the nation to harness. If the Obama Administration and Congress want to save lives and control health costs, Alzheimer's disease is certainly the best place to begin.

The Alzheimer's Association welcomes President Obama's commitment to health care issues and looks forward to working with his Administration to advance health care reform and making Alzheimer's a national priority.

The Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's. For more information, visit www.alz.org.

###