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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

**Lt. Governor Dewhurst, Senators Duncan, Nelson & Ogden Honored
for Championing First State Funding for Alzheimer's Research in 2005**



State Lawmakers Urged to Increase Alzheimer's Research Support This Session

AUSTIN, TX. – Kitty Allen, whose husband, former state Rep. Joe Allen of Baytown, has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, joined the state's top Alzheimer's researchers at the state capitol today to urge Texas lawmakers to increase state funding for Alzheimer's research to \$4 million for the 2007-09 biennium.

"I've lived half of my adult life with Alzheimer's, first watching my mother-in-law die of complications of this personality-robbing disease, and then taking care of my husband, Joe, after he was diagnosed four years ago with early onset Alzheimer's at age 63," said Allen, who as a long-time Alzheimer's activist at the local, state and national levels endorsed increased research support.

Lt. Governor David Dewhurst said, "Alzheimer's is such a tragic disease which has painfully affected so many families, including my own. That's why I want to see more state and private dollars going into research to find the promise of improved treatment." He is being honored today for his leadership two years ago in securing the first state funding for Alzheimer's research in Texas history.

Texas is third in the nation (behind California and Florida) in the number of estimated Alzheimer's cases – affecting about 200,000 Texans and their families. That number is projected to more than double by 2025, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

Jim Hinds, Project Coordinator for the Texas Alzheimer's Research Consortium, said the Consortium's four institutions moved quickly after the last session "to put the first-ever \$2 million in state research funding to work by creating a large, standardized database to facilitate studies of Alzheimer's that can lead to earlier diagnosis and improvements in patient care and quality of life."

Members of the Texas Alzheimer's Research Consortium are Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, and University of North Texas Health Science Center.

The shared database includes clinical and demographic data from 5,000 subjects recruited by these four research institutions from across the state. Already the state's leading Alzheimer's researchers are examining how genetics contributes to the age at Alzheimer's onset and whether inflammatory changes in the blood affect onset of this disease.

If state lawmakers approve spending \$4 million on Alzheimer's research over the next two years, Hinds said the Consortium could: 1) recruit additional research subjects, 2) research how genetic factors relate to Alzheimer's progression and to risk of developing the disease, and 3) depending upon research developments, could explore questions such as whether hormones, depression, and other factors are associated with Alzheimer's disease.

"I believe the Consortium has designed the right and necessary experiments to discover the fundamental cause of Alzheimer's disease," said Dr. Roger Rosenberg, Director of the Alzheimer's Disease Center at UT Southwestern.

"That information will lead us to directed thinking on what drugs to develop to begin the end of Alzheimer's disease in our lifetime. No one university in Texas could conduct this level of research enterprise alone," Rosenberg said.

At noon today, **Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst** will receive the 2007 *State of Texas Public Service Award* from the Alzheimer's Association, Capital of Texas and Houston and Southeast Texas chapters, for his early support last session for state-funded Alzheimer's research.

Senators Robert Duncan of Lubbock, Jane Nelson of Lewisville, and Steve Ogden of Bryan are co-recipients of the Texas Alzheimer's *Leadership and Public Service Award* for their key roles in securing the \$2 million in Alzheimer's research funding last session.

"My mother suffered from Alzheimer's at the end of her life. I've read about Alzheimer's and studied it, but until you live it, you cannot imagine the cruelty of the disease," said Senator Nelson. "I am so appreciative of the work of those who advocate on behalf of patients and their families, both as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services and as a former care-giver."

Senator Duncan, Chairman of the Senate State Affairs Committee, said, "It is critical we continue to build on that momentum and support the ground-breaking work of the Texas Alzheimer's Research Consortium. Together, we have reached a milestone in the Legislature on behalf of Alzheimer's research, but there is more work to be done."