

Tuesday, February 6, 2007

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –**

**Lieutenant Governor Predicts “Likely Increase” in State Funding for Alzheimer's Research**

AUSTIN, TX. – Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst, whose mother died of complications of Alzheimer's disease, told Alzheimer's advocates here today that state “Alzheimer's funding will continue and likely will increase” this session.

“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,” Dewhurst said.

The lieutenant governor received the 2007 *State of Texas Public Service Award* from the Alzheimer's Association, Capital of Texas and Houston and Southeast Texas chapters, today for his leadership last session in securing the first state funding for Alzheimer's research in Texas history (\$2 million for the 2005-07 biennium).

Senators Robert Duncan of Lubbock, Jane Nelson of Lewisville, and Steve Ogden of Bryan received the Texas Alzheimer's *Leadership and Public Service Award* for their key roles in supporting Alzheimer's research in Texas.

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 double state funding for Alzheimer's research to \$4 million for the next two years.

“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.

Texas is third in the nation (behind California and Florida) in the number of estimated Alzheimer's cases – and about 200,000 Texans and their families are affected. 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 in Dallas. "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."

Dr. Rachelle S. Doody, the Effie Marie Cain chair in Alzheimer's Disease Research at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, said, "Definitive research requires that a large number of individuals be studied in a relatively short time, and this is now possible because the coordination provided by the Texas Alzheimer's Research Consortium. Texas is moving to the forefront of States in its informed approach to conquering this disease."

Senator Nelsons said, "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. 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."