

Rep. Hinchey Re-Introduces New Federal Acupuncture Bill in 109th Congress

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The November 2004 issue of *Acupuncture Today* published the names of 54 co-sponsors of the Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act of 2003, HR 1477, which was introduced by Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY, 22nd district). This bill covered qualified acupuncturist services under both Medicare Part B and the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program. Following the press deadline of the November 2004 issue, AcupunctureToday.com, in its "Breaking News" section, published the names of nine additional co-sponsors of HR 1477.

By June 2004, I had established a full-time lobbying presence on Capitol Hill, representing the Council of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Associations (CAOMA), based in California, and the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine National Coalition (AOMNC), based in Florida. Once on Capitol Hill, I met personally with several U. S. Representatives and 121 congressional health aides. The health aides all received detailed written national and state materials on acupuncture and Oriental medicine, developed by Marcus & Associates, in support of HR 1477. I continued my work on Capitol Hill until November 2004.

When the 108th Congress (2003-2004) adjourned Dec. 7, 2004, there were 63 co-sponsors of HR 1477. In the 107th Congress (2001-2002), there were 36 co-sponsors of the then Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act of 2001 (then bill HR 747), which indicates the progress that has been made through lobbying, education, and practitioners' and patients' efforts.

The 2005 Bill: HR 818

On Feb. 15, 2005, Rep. Hinchey re-introduced the Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act of 2005 (under a new bill number, HR 818), which at press time has 31 co-sponsors from the following states and Guam:

Arizona

- Rep. Raul M. Grijalva (D), 7th district

California

- Rep. Lynn C. Woolsey (D), 6th district
- Rep. Tom Lantos (D), 12th district
- Rep. Sam Farr (D), 17th district
- Rep. Brad Sherman (D), 27th district
- Rep. Adam Schiff (D), 29th district
- Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D), 30th district
- Rep. Edward R. Royce (R), 40th district
- Rep. Gary G. Miller (R), 42nd district

- Rep. Bob Filner (D), 51st district

Florida

- Rep. Robert I. Wexler (D), 19th district

Guam

- Rep. Madeleine Z. Bordallo (D)

Hawaii

- Rep. Neil Abercrombie (D), 1st district

Illinois

- Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D), 4th district
- Rep. Janice D. Schakowsky (D), 9th district

Louisiana

- Rep. William J. Jefferson (D), 2nd district

Maryland

- Rep. Albert Wynn (D), 4th district
- Rep. Elijah W. Cummings (D), 7th district

Massachusetts

- Rep. Barney Frank (D), 4th district

Michigan

- Rep. Dale E. Kildee (D), 5th district
- Rep. John Conyers (D), 14th district

New York

- Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D), 4th district
- Rep. Gary L. Ackerman (D), 5th district
- Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D), 8th district
- Rep. Edolphus Towns (D), 10th district
- Rep. Major R. Owens (D), 11th district
- Rep. Michael R. McNulty (D), 21st district

Ohio

- Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich (D), 10th district

Texas

- Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D), 18th district

Vermont

- Rep. Bernard Sanders (I), at-large

Virginia

- Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R), 10th district

Grassroots Campaign and Strategy

Since the publication of the November 2004 article on HR 1477, a number of practitioners have contacted me. Some wanted information about the bill. Others offered to help in the effort to increase the number of co-sponsors. I asked these practitioners to contact their local representatives. Once they informed me that a district contact had been made, I then followed up by contacting the representative's health aides in Washington, D.C.

You can read the text of HR 818 and other important information on the Council of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Associations' (CAOMA) Web site at www.acucouncil.org, and on the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine National Coalition's (AOMNC) Web site at www.aomnc.com.

On Jan. 28, 2005, Dr. Michael R. McCoy, executive director of the National Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Alliance, speaking on behalf the board of directors of the Alliance, announced the Alliance's endorsement and support for the Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act. "This bill marks an important step forward in the recognition and acceptance of acupuncture as a key modality in the American health care system," said Dr. McCoy.

To those who are interested, and want to contact their representative, if they are not yet a co-sponsor of the new bill, it would be most helpful if you would contact me at the e-mail address and/or phone number below. I will then send you information on how and where to contact them. You can also find out who your representative is by entering your zip code at www.congress.org. Contact information for your representative is at this Web site as well. You can find a sample constituent letter on the above-cited Web sites.

Once you have communicated your support to your representative, please keep me informed as to the date of your telephone, letter or e-mail contact, which congressional office you contacted, and the name of the staff person with whom you spoke, so I can follow up with your representative's health aide.

Please send copies of your letters which describe, where possible, specifics on how, as an acupuncturist, you were able to help your patients who are Medicare beneficiaries or federal employees. This information, which can be persuasive in showing why the member should co-sponsor the bill, will be transmitted to the congressional health aides whom I plan to meet with in 2005. Overall, these efforts and appropriate follow-through, via appropriate channels, are critical to the ultimate success of HR 818 becoming law.

Fundraising

Your financial contributions are needed to move HR 818 forward. Ideas for fundraisers are welcome. One suggestion that has been successfully implemented is to ask five of your patients to contribute \$10.00 each to the lobbying campaign to help in passing this bill. You can then match the amount your patients have contributed. Your participation and financial support for the lobbying effort for the passage of HR 818 will be greatly appreciated.

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