
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Patty Guinto, 650.623.3124; patty.guinto@alz.org

**SENATOR BARBARA BOXER AND REPRESENTATIVE SAM FARR
SPONSOR LEGISLATION TO END THE TWO-YEAR WAIT FOR MEDICARE**

The Alzheimer's Association's® Northern California and Northern Nevada Chapter commends Senator Barbara Boxer and Representative Sam Farr (Calif. District 17) for cosponsoring the "Ending the Medicare Disability Waiting Period Act of 2009" H.R. 1708, which phases out the two-year wait period for Medicare for those under age 65 who qualify for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

Today more than 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer's disease and up to a half million of these individuals are under age 65 and have younger-onset Alzheimer's or a related dementia. After working full-time and paying into Medicare like all other employed Americans – many of these individuals lose their jobs and with it their employer-based health coverage. As these individuals grapple with the challenges an Alzheimer diagnosis brings to their lives, they also discover that federal law requires them to wait two additional years *after* their disability determination to become eligible for Medicare benefits.

"Providing immediate access to Medicare benefits for people disabled by Alzheimer's disease would reduce the problem of lack of health insurance and high out-of-pocket expenditures for this vulnerable population," said William H. Fisher, the chief executive officer of the Alzheimer's Association's Northern California and Northern Nevada Chapter. "This legislation would ensure access to critical health care services offered by Medicare that can help to manage the disease and help to maintain independence."

There are more than 1.5 million people with disabling conditions suffering through two long years for much needed Medicare coverage. Nearly 40 percent of these individuals are without health insurance coverage at some point during their wait for Medicare and 24 percent have no health insurance during this entire period. These are important gaps in the health care system that can no longer be ignored.

Alzheimer's disease poses tremendous burdens on individuals and families, burdens made worse by lack of health care coverage. The Alzheimer's Association is grateful for the leadership of Representative Farr and his support of this important legislation that seeks to provide invaluable health coverage and peace of mind for those with Alzheimer's and other disabling, fatal diseases.

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.