



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Carla Zbacnik
952.857.0526
carla.zbacnik@alz.org

**SENATOR AL FRANKEN SPONSORS LANDMARK LEGISLATION
ADDRESSING ESCALATING ALZHEIMER CRISIS**

Alzheimer's Association Statement

Minneapolis, MN, July 27, 2009 – The Alzheimer's Association's® Minnesota-North Dakota commends Senator Al Franken for cosponsoring the "*Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2009*" S. 1492. For the more than 5 million people nationwide living with Alzheimer's, and the 97,760 living right here in Minnesota, it is a tremendous step in the fight against the disease and offers great promise for someday having a world without Alzheimer's.

With an aging baby boomer population soon to be at the epicenter of an escalating Alzheimer crisis, the disease is quickly becoming the country's biggest, broadest and most expensive problem – to individuals, families, and the healthcare system. According to the Alzheimer's Association's *2009 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures* report, total healthcare costs are more than three times higher for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias than for other people the same age without the disease. For the last six years, federal funding for Alzheimer research has declined in real terms. In fact, for every dollar the government spends on the costs of Alzheimer care, it invests less than a penny in research to find a cure. This is all while the loss of lives and costs to Medicare and Medicaid continue to soar.

This legislation authorizes a significant increase in funding for Alzheimer research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to \$2 billion to restore momentum to the pursuit of better diagnosis, prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's disease. "The Alzheimer's Association commends Senator Al Franken for his recognition of the growing threat of Alzheimer's," said Mary Birchard, Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter. "By supporting the *Alzheimer Breakthrough Act*, Senator Franken has signaled his understanding of the grave threat Alzheimer's poses to the residents of Minnesota and the nation."

In addition to the increase in research funding, this legislation provides much needed support for the nearly 10 million caregivers nationwide, including the 175,960 Alzheimer caregivers who live in Minnesota. Every day these individuals grapple with the emotional, physical and financial challenges of caring for someone with Alzheimer's or a related dementia. The bill provides vital resources and tools to assist caregivers in their demanding role. It also calls for a national summit on Alzheimer's to look at promising research possibilities and programs that are important in fighting this disease and supporting those who are struggling with it.

Alzheimer's disease poses tremendous human, social and economic burdens on the nation and its effects will be a challenge to us all. The *Alzheimer Breakthrough Act* is a significant step forward in the fight against this disease. The Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter thanks Senator Franken for his leadership in supporting this meaningful legislation that is so vital for Minnesota and the nation.

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/mnnd

###