

## **NEW SURVEY SHOWS CONFRONTING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE A KEY ISSUE IN 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

### How Presidential Candidates Address Escalating Epidemic Proves to Be Pivotal Among Voters

With the presidential caucuses underway and primary season officially beginning, a poll released recently by the Alzheimer's Association indicates how the presidential candidates plan to address the escalating Alzheimer epidemic, which could determine who Americans vote for in November. Finding a way to halt or delay the progression of Alzheimer's disease is paramount on the minds of Americans. In a new national survey conducted by Hart Research, more than two out of three Americans polled (68 percent) think it is important to increase the amount of Alzheimer disease research funding and two out of three voters (67 percent) would be more likely to select a presidential candidate who supports increased government funding for Alzheimer research. "Every presidential candidate needs to understand that Alzheimer's is an important issue for American voters," said Harry Johns, President and CEO of the Alzheimer's Association. "This disease steals millions of lives and threatens to overwhelm our healthcare and long term care systems. The American people understand that more must be done to stop this escalating epidemic and they want a President who will act to address the concerns of the millions affected by Alzheimer's today and those who will face it tomorrow."

#### **Alzheimer's Disease Feared More Than Natural Disasters**

- The survey revealed that Americans are more afraid of developing Alzheimer's disease (69 percent) than becoming a victim of a natural disaster, such as a wildfire or hurricane (42 percent).
- Somewhat surprisingly, age does not play a factor here as 18-34 year olds (65 percent) are just as likely as seniors (64 percent) to be concerned about themselves or a family member developing Alzheimer's.

#### **Alzheimer's is a Bipartisan Issue**

- Today there are as many 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer's disease and that number is expected to grow to as many as 16 million by 2050. Among voters polled the concern about developing Alzheimer's cuts across party lines with Republicans (64 percent), Democrats (68 percent), and Independents (66 percent).

#### **An Overwhelming Financial Burden to Families and Health Care System**

- Alzheimer's disease is intrinsically linked to long-term care because many of those with the disease are ultimately placed in long term care facilities when families can no longer provide the round-the-clock care people in the advanced stages of the

disease require. Millions of families rely on Medicaid to cover long term care costs due to the fact that caring for someone with Alzheimer's can quickly deplete family assets.

- This survey found financing the expensive costs of long term care was a key issue on voters' minds, as almost two thirds (62 percent) polled indicated they would vote for a presidential candidate who sought to increase financial assistance for families taking care of a loved one with Alzheimer's. Further, almost three out of four (70 percent) said reforming Medicare and Medicaid to provide better care for the growing Alzheimer disease population could be a determining factor in who they would choose as the next president.

### **Women are more likely to vote for candidate who addresses Alzheimer issues**

- Women are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports increasing government funding for Alzheimer's research (72 percent vs. 63 percent of men); women are more likely to choose a candidate who supports Medicare and Medicaid reforms to help those living with Alzheimer's receive better care (77 percent vs. 66 percent of men); and they are more likely to vote for candidates who support increased financial assistance for persons with Alzheimer's to receive long term care (69 percent vs. 59 percent of men.)

### **Alzheimer's is a major issue for Diverse Audiences**

- The survey revealed that Hispanics are more concerned about developing Alzheimer's (75 percent) than African-Americans (68 percent) or Caucasians (65 percent)
- All ethnic groups surveyed support more widespread government involvement and increased government funding for Alzheimer research. African Americans (78 percent), Hispanics (71 percent) and Caucasians (67 percent).

### **As candidates continue their campaigns across the country, join together and deliver one message to presidential candidates:**

#### **You must address Alzheimer's disease - the 21<sup>st</sup> century health care crisis.**

- Alzheimer's is a major driver of health care costs of older Americans.
- Alzheimer's is the biggest threat for millions of baby boomers.
- Americans 55 and older fear Alzheimer's more than any other disease.

To become a member of the Alzheimer's Advocacy Network, visit [www.alzmdak.org](http://www.alzmdak.org) or contact Angie Bizal at (952) 857-0522 or [angie.bizal@alz.org](mailto:angie.bizal@alz.org).

#### **The Alzheimer's Association Survey**

The Alzheimer's Association poll, conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., was created to measure the impact of how Alzheimer issues would impact voters. The nationwide survey was conducted via telephone with a random sample of 801 adults. The overall sampling error for this survey is +/- 3.5%.