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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ENDING THE TWO-YEAR WAIT PERIOD FOR MEDICARE**  
*Alzheimer's Association Statement*

**Washington, D.C., April 7, 2009** – The Alzheimer's Association® commends Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) and Representative Gene Green (D-Texas) for their important legislation phasing out the two-year wait period for Medicare for those under age 65 who qualify for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). We also appreciate the original cosponsors of the legislation – Senators Susan Collins (R-Maine), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Representative Lee Terry (R-Neb.) for their support.

There are 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.

The Alzheimer's Association urges members of Congress to cosponsor the "*Ending the Medicare Disability Waiting Period Act of 2009*" (S. 700 and H.R. 1708). Phasing out the waiting period for 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. It would ensure access to critical health care services 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 Senator Bingaman and Congressman Green and urges bipartisan support and swift enactment of this important legislation that provides 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](http://www.alz.org).