

April 23, 2003

To: Parity Supporters

From: Peter Newbould, MHLG Health Policy Committee Cochair  
Chris Koyanagi, MHLG Health Policy Committee Cochair

Re: **Majority Cosponsors Parity** (Parity Alert #23)

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The “Senator Paul Wellstone Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act” ([S. 486/H.R. 953](#)) has now gained a majority of cosponsors in both the House and the Senate! Congratulations and thank you to all national organizations and your state affiliates which have been pressing members of Congress to make this very visible commitment that will ease insurance discrimination against mental disorders. We also achieved a significant victory when Senator Pete Domenici secured \$5.4 billion in the final Budget Resolution to offset costs associated with enactment of parity legislation. See “Background” below for details.

Introduced on February 27 by Senators Pete Domenici and Edward Kennedy and Representatives Jim Ramstad and Patrick Kennedy, this critical legislation now has 57 cosponsors in the Senate and 231 in the House. Only a handful of the previous cosponsors have not signed on to the new bill. However, many of the newest Members of Congress are yet to express their support for mental health parity. Please ask constituents to continue their outreach efforts to these legislators – see “Targets” list below – and to be sure to thank Members who have cosponsored.

**Action:**

Continue your outreach to non-cosponsors of the “Senator Paul Wellstone Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act” and urge them to cosponsor this important legislation.

*Option 1:*

Telephone your legislators by using the Parity Hotline (**1-866-parity4**...1-866-727-4894). This toll-free number reaches the Capitol switchboard, which can connect callers to their members of the Senate and House.

*Option 2:*

Or write a letter – personalize the sample below with your perspective on how the parity bill would help you or your patients. Find your Representative at <http://www.house.gov/>.

**Message:**

*To House Members:* “I’m calling as a constituent to urge the Representative to cosponsor the Ramstad-Kennedy mental health parity bill (H.R. 953). It’s vital to pass this legislation to ban insurance discrimination against people with mental health disorders.”

*To Senators:* “I’m calling as a constituent to urge the Senator to cosponsor the Domenici-Kennedy mental health parity bill (S. 486). It’s vital to pass this legislation to ban insurance discrimination against people with mental health disorders.”

**Targets:**

***Previous Senate cosponsors of parity who have yet to cosponsor S. 486***

ALABAMA	Richard C. Shelby (R-AL)
DELAWARE	Thomas R. Carper (D-DE)
FLORIDA	*Bob Graham (D-FL)
GEORGIA	Zell Miller (D-GA)
LOUISIANA	*John B. Breaux (D-LA)
NORTH DAKOTA	*Kent Conrad (D-ND)
TENNESSEE	*Bill Frist (R-TN)
WEST VIRGINIA	Robert C. Byrd (D-WV)

***Freshman Senators who have yet to cosponsor S. 486***

ALASKA	Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
ARKANSAS	Mark Pryor (D-AR)
GEORGIA	Saxby Chambliss (R-GA)
MISSOURI	James Talent (R-MO)
NEW HAMPSHIRE	John Sununu (R-NH)
NORTH CAROLINA	Elizabeth Dole (R-NC)
TENNESSEE	Lamar Alexander (R-TN)
TEXAS	John Cornyn (R-TX)

***Previous House cosponsors of parity who have yet to cosponsor H.R. 953***

ARIZONA	Jim Kolbe (R-AZ-8)
CONNECTICUT	*Nancy L. Johnson (R-CT-5)
ILLINOIS	*John M. Shimkus (R-IL-19)
MARYLAND	Roscoe G. Bartlett (R-MD-6)
NEW JERSEY	*Mike Ferguson (R-NJ-7)
NEW YORK	Peter T. King (R-NY-3)
TEXAS	Charles A. Gonzalez (D-TX-20)

***Freshman Representatives who have yet to cosponsor H.R. 953***

ALABAMA	Jo Bonner (R-AL-1)
	Mike Rogers (R-AL-3)
ARIZONA	Trent Franks (R-AZ-2)
CALIFORNIA	Devin Nunes (R-CA-21)
COLORADO	*Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO-4)
	Bob Beauprez (R-CO-7)
FLORIDA	Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL-5)
	Katherine Harris (R-FL-13)
	Kendrick Meek (D-FL-17)
	Tom Feeney (R-FL-24)
	Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL-25)
GEORGIA	Jim Marshall (D-GA-3)
	*Phil Gingrey (R-GA-11)
INDIANA	Chris Chocoma (R-IN-2)
IOWA	Steve King (R-IA-5)
LOUISIANA	Rodney Alexander (D-LA-5)
MICHIGAN	Candice Miller (R-MI-10)
	Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI-11)
MINNESOTA	*John Kline (R-MN-2)
NEVADA	*Jon Porter (R-NV-3)
NEW HAMPSHIRE	Jeb Bradley (R-NH-1)
NEW JERSEY	Scott Garrett (R-NJ-5)

NEW MEXICO	Steve Pearce (R-NM-2)
OHIO	Michael Turner (R-OH-3)
OKLAHOMA	*Tom Cole (R-OK-4)
PENNSYLVANIA	Jim Gerlach (R-PA-6)
SOUTH CAROLINA	J. Gresham Barrett (R-SC-3)
SOUTH DAKOTA	William Janklow (R-SD-AL)
TENNESSEE	*Marsha Blackburn (R-TN-7)
TEXAS	Jeb Hensarling (R-TX-5)
	Michael Burgess (R-TX-26)
	*John Carter (R-TX-31)
UTAH	Rob Bishop (R-UT-1)

***Additional House Members who should be asked to cosponsor H.R. 953***

CALIFORNIA	Calvin Dooley (D-CA-20)
FLORIDA	Allen Boyd (D-FL-2)
LOUISIANA	*Chris John (D-LA-7)
MISSISSIPPI	Gene Taylor (D-MS-4)
NORTH CAROLINA	Mike McIntyre (D-NC-7)
SOUTH CAROLINA	Henry Brown (R-SC-1)
TEXAS	*Ralph Hall (D-TX-4)
	Chet Edwards (D-TX-11)
	Charles Stenholm (D-TX-17)
	Charles Gonzalez (D-TX-20)
WASHINGTON	Adam Smith (D-WA-9)
WISCONSIN	David Obey (D-WI-7)

*\* = member of a key health committee*

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**Sample House Letter**

The Honorable (full name)  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative (last name):

I am writing as a constituent to (thank you for cosponsoring//urge you to cosponsor) the “Senator Paul Wellstone Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act” (H.R. 953), sponsored by Representatives Jim Ramstad and Patrick Kennedy.

This bipartisan bill would take great strides in ending the use of arbitrary, one-size-fits-all limits on mental health benefits that are different from limits on other medical and surgical benefits. Passage of this legislation can make a real difference for patients, many of whom now face higher coinsurance and arbitrary limits on the days of care that can provide them with help for their mental disorder.

With a majority of each house of Congress and more than 250 national organizations supporting full mental health parity, it is obvious that this much-needed legislation is long overdue. President Bush echoed this sentiment last April when he urged Congress to pass parity legislation.

Please urge the Congressional Leadership to prioritize passage of full mental health parity legislation before the summer recess of the 108th Congress. I appreciate your consideration of my concerns and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

### **Sample Senate Letter**

The Honorable (full name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

I am writing as constituent to (thank you for cosponsoring//urge you to cosponsor) the “Senator Paul Wellstone Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act” (S. 486), sponsored by Senators Pete Domenici and Edward Kennedy.

This bipartisan bill would take great strides in ending the use of arbitrary, one-size-fits-all limits on mental health benefits that are different from limits on other medical and surgical benefits. Passage of this legislation can make a real difference for patients, many of whom now face higher coinsurance and arbitrary limits on the days of care that can provide help them with help for their mental disorder.

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Sincerely,

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**Fact Sheets:** Revised version of parity fact sheets are now posted at [www.mhlg.org/page18.html](http://www.mhlg.org/page18.html).

**Background:** We’re thrilled to report that Senator Domenici has secured \$5.4 billion over 10 years in the Budget Resolution approved April 11 to offset any costs associated with enactment of mental health parity legislation. One will not find a line item or a description of that \$5.4 Billion anywhere in legislative language but the funds were included in Function 550. See this April 11 colloquy between Senators Domenici and Nickles, from the Congressional Record page S5307.

#### **MENTAL HEALTH PARITY ASSUMPTION**

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I compliment my friend from Oklahoma and the Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee on a job well done. He has skillfully navigated a difficult course to produce the budget conference report before us today. Congratulations.

I would like to raise the issue of mental health parity as the Senate debates the FY 2004 Budget Resolution Conference Report.

It is my understanding the conference report before us assumes the revenue impact of enacting a mental health parity law by using the Congressional Budget Office score for S. 543 from the 107th Congress of \$5.4 billion over 10 years. However, I want to make sure that this is indeed the case because the assumption I just mentioned is not specifically referenced in the conference report. Rather, the overall revenue number is such that it assumes Congress will pass mental health parity legislation.

Mr. NICKLES. I understand the concern of the distinguished senior Senator from New Mexico about mental health parity, and I would concur with my colleague's assessment. The conference report does assume the revenue impact of enacting mental health parity legislation.

Mr. DOMENICI. I thank the distinguished Chairman for his consideration and explanation of this important matter.

**Update on Previous Alert:** Many organizations mobilized their grassroots after our March 27 alert #22 that asked constituents to contact Senators who sit on the Health Committee and urge the Senator to ask Chairman Gregg to schedule a markup immediately on S. 486. Please continue these calls and letters until that date is announced. See <http://health.senate.gov/> for a list of the 21 Senators on that Committee and contact us if you would like another copy of alert #22.