

APR 20 2011

MEMO



Senate of Pennsylvania

April 20, 2011

TO: ALL SENATORS

FROM: Stewart J. Greenleaf

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stewart".

SUBJECT: Cosponsorship – **Lyme Disease Awareness Month**

I plan to offer a resolution designating May 2011 as “Lyme Disease Awareness Month” in Pennsylvania.

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted primarily by ticks and is caused by the spirochete *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases and disorders, such as babesiosis, bartonella and ehrlichiosis, pose a serious threat to the quality of life of many Pennsylvanians, with the frequency of diagnosed and reported Lyme disease cases increasing dramatically over the past several years.

In the United States, from 2004 to 2009, there was a 94% increase in total reported cases of Lyme disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) most recent 15-year surveillance study (October 2008) reveals continued emergence and geographic expansion across the United States. This study also reports a disproportionate increase among children and recommends a Public Health Action calling for an increase in targeted prevention strategies, tick avoidance, early disease recognition, and early treatment interventions.

Pennsylvania posted a 50% increase in reported cases in 2009 over the previous year. During 2009, Pennsylvania ranked first in the nation with 5,722 confirmed cases, with an additional increase to 6,277 in 2010 (provisional numbers) of Lyme disease.

The most common way to acquire Lyme disease is to be bitten by a tick that carries the spirochete. This disease is not limited to age or ethnic boundaries. Lyme disease can cause early symptoms such as a rash or flu-like symptoms, fever, muscle aches, headaches and fatigue that can easily be misdiagnosed. If not caught early, Lyme disease can lead to chronic debilitating illness that is very difficult to eradicate.

The prevention of Lyme disease and other tick-borne disorders is difficult. If proper caution is taken while engaged in outdoor activities from early spring through late fall, frequent tick checks are made and ticks are removed and disposed of promptly and properly, the people of this Commonwealth can greatly reduce their chances of tick pathogen transmission. Individuals can greatly reduce the risk of Lyme disease on their properties through landscape, insecticide, and other measures found to be effective.

The early clinical diagnosis and appropriate treatment of these tick-borne disorders and diseases can greatly reduce the risks of continued, diverse and chronic symptoms which can affect every system and organ of the human body and often every aspect of their lives.

If you are interested in cosponsoring this resolution, please contact Pat Snively of my office by e-mailing her at psnively@pasen.gov by the close of business on Tuesday, April 26th.