

JUN 03 2011

MEMO



Senate of Pennsylvania

June 2, 2011

TO: ALL SENATORS
FROM: Stewart J. Greenleaf *Stewart*
SUBJECT: Cosponsorship – **Women in Pain Awareness Month**

I plan to offer a resolution designating September 2011 as “Women in Pain Awareness Month” in Pennsylvania.

Research indicates that differences in men and women exist in the experience of pain, with women generally experiencing more recurrent pain, more severe pain and longer-lasting pain than men. Women have a higher prevalence than men of chronic pain syndromes and diseases associated with chronic pain, such as fibromyalgia, reflex sympathetic dystrophy and osteoarthritis.

Although women and men both have strong natural pain-killing systems, these systems operate differently as the presence of estrogen lowers an individual's threshold for pain while testosterone elevates an individual's tolerance for pain. A 2001 study in the *Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics* found that women's pain reports are taken less seriously than those of men and that women receive less aggressive treatment than men for their pain.

According to the National Institutes of Health, pain is the most common reason Americans access the health care system and more than 76.5 million Americans suffer from pain, both chronic and acute, which increases health care costs, estimated at \$100 billion annually in health care expenses, lost income and lost productivity. Because women respond differently than men to many pain medications and tend to receive less aggressive treatment, their pain is often more all-encompassing and the level of disability greater. The difference in the treatment of women in pain, as compared to that of men, is more than a personal or gender issue; it is a societal issue.

Women in Pain Awareness Group was founded in 2010 to increase awareness of the gender disparity women experience worldwide in the assessment and treatment of their pain. Women in Pain Awareness Group, along with Persons With Pain International, believes empowering women to be better consumers for their pain management care, sensitizing health care professionals to gender pain disparities and enlightening public policymakers about pain as a major health issue will improve life outcomes for all women in pain.

Adoption of this resolution will draw public attention to the important need for women to have their pain managed effectively and without bias through self-empowerment, public awareness, health care professional education and legislative advocacy.

If you are interested in cosponsoring this resolution, please contact Pat Snively of my office by e-mailing her at psnively@pasen.gov.