



APR 18 2012

Senate of Pennsylvania

April 17, 2012

**TO:** ALL SENATORS

**FROM:** Stewart J. Greenleaf *Stewart*

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

I plan to offer a resolution designating May 2012 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.

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.

The total reported cases of Lyme disease have more than doubled in Pennsylvania from 2006-2011. During 2010, Pennsylvania ranked first in the nation with 3,805 confirmed and probable cases, with an additional increase to 7,484 cases in 2011 (CDC provisional numbers) of Lyme disease, again ranking Pennsylvania first in the nation. Experts forecast a significant surge in Lyme disease for 2012, warning that Northeastern states should be prepared and should notify the public of increased risk and the need for prevention.

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](mailto:psnively@pasen.gov) by the close of business on Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>.*