

### **Lobbying Toolkit: Zika Background and Talking Points**

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, President Obama requested a \$1.9 billion emergency supplemental funding package to combat the Zika virus. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, Congress adjourned for a seven-week recess without sending a Zika funding bill to the President's desk for his signature.

Instead of working in a bipartisan way to address this public health emergency and provide federal agencies, states and localities with the funds necessary to combat the Zika virus, Congress put forth a proposal that drew funds from existing public health priorities and restricted contraception and contraceptive counseling needed to prevent unwanted pregnancy and stop sexual transmission of Zika.

Your Members of Congress will be home in August, holding town hall meetings and other opportunities to hear from you, their constituents. **Please join ACOG in urging your U.S. Senators and Representative to come together, rise above partisanship, and pass an emergency funding bill for Zika research, mosquito abatement, and prevention – including family planning -- as soon as they return to Washington, D.C.**

#### **Some Stats on Zika in the United States:**

- ✓ As of July 20<sup>th</sup>, 5,200 Americans have been diagnosed with the Zika virus – over 3,800 in the territories, and more than 1,400 in the states;
- ✓ Most alarmingly, 400 pregnant women in the states and another 378 in the territories have been diagnosed with Zika and are being monitored by the CDC;
- ✓ The Zika virus has been shown to cause devastating birth defects, most notably microcephaly, in infants whose mothers contract it during pregnancy.

To find out more about the Zika virus and what ACOG has been doing to combat Zika, **[check out ACOG's Zika page.](#)**

#### **Key Talking Points for Town Halls:**

- ✓ As an ob-gyn and constituent, I implore you to pass a BIPARTISAN Zika funding bill immediately upon your return to Washington, D.C. this September.
- ✓ We need Congress to provide appropriate funding levels for all aspects of Zika response: research, mosquito abatement, and prevention – including family planning.
- ✓ Zika, and its associated birth defects, is a serious public health emergency affecting several hundred pregnant women in the United States and territories - the numbers just keep growing. **[Click here to find CDC's website for up-to-date tracking of reported cases in the United States and territories.](#)**
- ✓ Every baby born with microcephaly will cost our Nation an estimated \$10 million in lifetime care, in addition to the devastating emotional trauma to families.
- ✓ I see firsthand the real implications of the Zika virus on our patients – the fear and the mounting “unknowns,” and experience the frustration of the limited information we have about Zika.
- ✓ As a physician and an active member of our community, I implore you to make this your priority. We cannot afford to wait. We need to act now and we need to act together.

**How to Attend a Town Hall:**

- 1) Find out when and where your Members of Congress are holding town hall meetings or forums by calling their offices or visiting their websites.
  - ✓ You can find the contact information for your Member's local office by **entering your ZIP code here**. Click on the "info" links below their photos. District office information is included in "Contact Information."
  - ✓ Ask to receive your Member's newsletters so that you will know about future town hall meetings and events. You may also be able to sign up for their newsletters on their websites.
- 2) Invite a friend, colleague, or family member to go with you. Think power in numbers!
- 3) At the Town Hall meeting or forum, check to see whether there is procedure for the meeting. There may be a sign-up sheet for individuals who would like to ask questions. When it's your turn, ask the candidate to **go back to Washington, D.C. in September and pass a bipartisan Zika funding bill immediately!**
- 4) **Be sure to follow-up.**
  - ✓ Your follow-up begins at the end of the Town Hall or forum. Find the Member of Congress to thank him or her, and make sure to introduce yourself to the Member of Congress' staff and get their email.
  - ✓ After the meeting or forum, send the Member of Congress a thank you note reiterating your request.
  - ✓ **Send a customizable message** to your Member of Congress' staff in Washington, D.C.
- 5) **Tell us what happened! Click here** to tell us about what happened at the Town Hall meeting or forum you attended. We'll follow up and support your work.

For more information, please contact ACOG's Government Affairs Department by phone at 202.863.2505, or by email at [sgarrity@acog.org](mailto:sgarrity@acog.org).