IDAHO LEGISLATURE PASSES RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF IAPG STATE PLAN EFFORTS

With the ceremonial swipe of a pen, Governor Butch Otter on March 27th affirmed a concurrent resolution passed by both houses of the Idaho state legislature that validates the seriousness of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. SCR 112 also supports the Idaho Alzheimer’s Planning Group in developing a state plan to address the disease as larger numbers of Idahoans are impacted by it. (Picture on page 8)

“SCR 112 IS A GREAT FIRST STEP TOWARD CREATING A PLAN THAT WILL GUIDE IDAHO THROUGH THE GROWING CHALLENGE OF ALZHEIMER’S.”
MIKE BERLIN FOUNDING MEMBER IAPG

“We’re extremely pleased that this resolution unanimously passed both the House and the Senate,” said Senator Joyce Broadsword, one of the resolution’s co-sponsors.

“Dementia is a devastating illness for both the patient and family members, and it greatly

The Inside Scoop:
* Dr. Rohn for House Seat (pg. 3)
* Q&A with Dr. Toevs (pg. 3)
* AARP Survey (pg. 5)
* IAPG to DC (pg. 6)
* Event Pictures (pg. 8)
* FYI on the Net (pg. 9)

IAPG Activities:
* May 10
  IAPG Steering Committee Meeting
* May 31
  Dr. Troy Rohn will speak at the North Idaho Conference sponsored by the Area Agency on Aging in Post Falls
* July 31-August 2
  IAPG will facilitate focus groups in conjunction with the annual IHCA/ICAL conference in Boise
impacts our state budgets for Medicaid and veterans’ benefits. It’s critical that we do all we can for these citizens, and do it cost effectively.”

The resolution did not require funding, but according to IAPG member Dr. Sarah Toevs (see Q&A on page 3), its passage is nevertheless important.

“The passage of SCR 112 validates the need to raise public awareness about Alzheimer’s and its impact on all of us,” she explained. “We believe it will enhance our credibility as we apply for grants and conduct research throughout the state; it’s also a ‘calling card’ of sorts as we talk with public agencies who will ultimately be responsible for putting a state plan into action down the road.”

Part of a Three-Pronged Approach

Passing SCR 112 fulfills one of the legislative objectives of IAPG’s three-part strategy to develop and implement a state plan for Alzheimer’s and other dementias. The other two areas of activity – data collection and public awareness – are also moving ahead. According to IAPG founding member Mike Berlin, these ongoing activities will form the basis for the ultimate legislative objective, which is to present concrete recommendations to lawmakers.

“We don’t yet know what, if any, service gaps exist, so we don’t know what we’ll be recommending as we move forward,” Berlin said. “What we do know is that SCR 112 is a great first step toward creating a plan that will guide Idaho through the growing challenge of this disease.”

~

Next Steps on the Legislative Path

The state’s Health Care Task Force is a bipartisan committee of elected officials that advises Idaho’s full legislature on issues related to health care. The IAPG plans to present a progress report on their findings to the Task Force in the fall, with recommendations eventually making their way through the legislature once again.

The IAPG would like to sincerely thank the following individuals in particular for their role in bringing the issue of Alzheimer’s Disease before the Idaho Legislature during the 2012 session:

▶ Senator Joyce Broadsword
▶ Senator Dan Schmidt
▶ Representative Fred Wood
▶ Representative John Rusche
▶ Representative Carlos Bilbao
IAPG MEMBER TO RUN FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Founding IAPG member Dr. Troy Rohn is competing in the May 15 primary for House Seat A in District 19. Dr. Rohn, a professor of biological sciences at Boise State University, has been instrumental in raising public awareness about Alzheimer's through his research in brain pathologies as well as speaking engagements throughout the state.

“A major issue of my platform is health care in general and specifically Alzheimer’s disease. If I’m elected I’ll be involved in drafting a bill for the legislature for the development of a strategic, statewide plan for passage during the 2013 session. I’ll also continue to educate and promote the cause of Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia to all citizens of Idaho.”

Q&A with Dr. Sarah Toevs

Leading the data gathering efforts of the IAPG is founding member Dr. Sarah Toevs, Chair and Professor in Boise State University’s Department of Community and Environmental Health. Originally a dental hygienist, she has taught in a university setting for the past 20 years, 11 of them at BSU. Since 2009 she has also been the director for BSU’s Center for the Study of Aging, and is a tireless advocate for older residents of our state.

IAPG Report: Many people can't relate to older individuals until they've gotten a few gray hairs themselves. You, on the other hand, graduated from the University of Utah with a doctorate in health promotion and education some time ago with an emphasis in gerontology [the study of aging]. What prompted you to go into that field?

Dr. Toevs: I was lucky to grow up on a family farm near Aberdeen surrounded by not only siblings and parents, but a rich cadre of cousins, great aunts, and other extended family members. Connecting and communicating with older adults has always been an important part of my life and inspired me to pursue graduate studies in gerontology. Working in the area of public health and helping older people, especially those who are vulnerable, has been a perfect fit for me.

IAPG Report: You began your career providing a one-one-one service to others, and now you’re involved in policy issues that affect large segments of the population. Do you
enjoy one type of interaction over the other?

Dr. Toevs: In many ways I’ve had the best of all worlds in my professional career: one on one interaction – which I still get with my students – and the opportunity to impact society through public policy advocacy. To me, the interplay between individuals, their communities and society as a whole is fascinating, and there’s opportunity to make a difference at all levels.

IAPG Report: How did you come to be a member of IAPG?

Dr. Toevs: I’d say being in the right place at the right time, seeing the commitment of people like Mike Berlin, and recognizing the power of what dedicated individuals can do. A lot of my work centers around vulnerable older adults, and since many Alzheimer’s patients fall into that category, it’s a natural step to want to help develop a state plan that addresses that population through IAPG.

IAPG Report: What is your role in the group?

Dr. Toevs: I’m leading data collection and assessment efforts as we bring to light the needs of individuals with Alzheimer’s and dementia, along with their caregivers and family members throughout Idaho. Over the years I’ve also developed an extensive network of contacts with public health and aging-related professionals, not to mention many talented undergraduate and graduate students who have a passion for gerontology-related issues. Bringing these different individuals together for such a worthy cause is really gratifying.

IAPG Report: What exactly are you looking for in your quest for statewide data?

Dr. Toevs: Our goal is to provide policy makers, program administrators and advocates with an Idaho-specific description of needs and opportunities in our state. What kinds of programs for AD patients are out there? Are they working? Is there a way to share a program that’s working in one part of the state with other locales? The best state plan would identify and connect existing resources so that Idahoans impacted by Alzheimer’s reap the maximum benefits.

IAPG Report: What types of research are you using and why have you selected those particular modes?

Dr. Toevs: We’re using a mixed-methods strategy to capture the Big Picture (through quantitative surveys) as well as the human element (through interviews and focus groups). The population we’re canvassing includes individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and
other dementias; their caregivers; family members; health care providers; state/government agencies and service organizations. We’re striving to “tell the story” from a variety of perspectives.

**IAPG Report:** What’s your time frame for this effort?

**Dr. Toevs:** We hope to complete the data collection phase by late summer and use the early fall to analyze and synthesize the information. We’ll present our findings to policy makers during the 2013 session and hope that the recommendations we come up with will serve as the foundation for a state plan.

**IAPG Report:** We know you’re in the middle of the data collection process, but to this point has anything jumped out at you?

**Dr. Toevs:** So far we’re finding some good news and some not so good. Respondents seem to be satisfied with the quality of the services they receive, but in many cases the cost is too high, or they don’t have access to all the services they could use. Not having enough information about what’s available is another issue. So there’s work to be done.

**IAPG Report:** From a personal standpoint, what have you taken from this experience?

**Dr. Toevs:** Being part of IAPG has been enriching, to say the least. The stories of what Alzheimer’s patients and caregivers have gone through has been both heartbreaking and insightful, and the fact that there are so many such stories validates the universality of this disease. The opportunity to speak with and listen to policy makers deliberate on critical health issues has been a great learning experience, too. It really is possible to collaborate with like-minded individuals and make something happen. That’s inspiring.

**IAPG Report:** One last question: you said you grew up on a farm. What did your family grow?

**Dr. Toevs:** Potatoes, of course. I am a native Idahoan, after all!

---

**Internal AARP Survey Shows the Most Important Thing on Seniors’ Minds … is Their Mind**

In 2010 AARP asked its members to fill out a survey showing which issues concerned them most. The choices were numerous, ranging from retirement savings and Social Security to physical health and prescription drugs. Of all the subjects they could choose from, one concerned them
above all else: “staying mentally sharp.”

“Members rated each topic as to how much it concerned them,” explained Peggy Munson, the Volunteer State President for AARP Idaho. “The highest percentage – 80 percent - said they were either ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ concerned with staying mentally sharp, and that percentage was the same both nationally and in Idaho.”

The next most important topic was “staying healthy” (through physical fitness, diet, nutrition, etc.), which 79 percent of AARP members, both nationally and in the state, said greatly concerned them. That was followed by “Social Security,” which was very or extremely concerning at 77 percent.

Members also said “paying for health care expenses” (co-pays, uncovered expenses, etc.) was a big concern; nearly 70 percent have trouble paying such expenses. Finally, 63 percent of the respondents said they are very or extremely worried about paying for prescription drugs.

“As greater numbers of seniors develop Alzheimer’s, you can imagine the ‘ripple effect’ throughout the overall senior population,” Munson said. “No one wants to experience the heartache of Alzheimer’s, so it’s important we do all we can to help those affected by it – or better yet, find a cure for it.”

MacKenzie Rodgers, Director, Alzheimer’s Association, Greater Idaho, and IAPG member Mike Berlin represented Idaho during the 2012 Alzheimer’s Advocacy Forum and Action Summit April 23-25 in Washington D.C. Berlin joined other volunteers from all 50 states to learn how to advocate on a national level for legislative support in the fight against Alzheimer’s. Speakers included pollster Frank Luntz (whose mother suffers from Alzheimer’s) and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sibelius.

In addition to working sessions, forum participants attended a gala dinner, sponsored by General Electric, and MC’d by Meredith Vieira.
Honoree Pat Summitt, Head Coach Emeritus of the University of Tennessee, was presented with the Sargent and Eunice Shriver Profiles in Dignity Award, and Colonel Karl Friedl, Ph.D. received the Ronald and Nancy Reagan Research Award.

At the conclusion of the conference, Berlin and Rodgers went to Capitol Hill to meet with representatives of Senator Mike Crapo and Congressman Mike Simpson, to encourage those legislators to fund the National Alzheimer’s Project Act (NAPA), which all of Idaho’s representatives voted for last year. NAPA addresses a variety of major challenges in fighting Alzheimer’s disease, including increasing public awareness; funding research to prevent, stop and/or slow the progression of the disease; improving detection and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer’s; improving care; fighting young-onset of the disease, and better preparing family caregivers to provide in-home care.

Berlin and Rodgers also spoke to legislators and their representatives about the Health Outcomes, Planning, and Education (HOPE) for Alzheimer’s Act. The Act is designed to improve conditions for people with Alzheimer’s and their caregivers by creating a package of services centered around a formal and well-documented diagnosis of the disease; such documentation would stay with the patient’s medical record to maintain continuity if the patient changed health care providers. In addition, caregivers would learn about predictable issues that can arise as the disease progresses, enabling them to avoid surprises and prepare for each successive stage.

A highlight of the trip was the opportunity to meet face-to-face with Senator and Mrs. Jim Risch, who took the time to come and meet Berlin and Rodgers at a reception given at the conference site.

“Senator Risch and his wife expressed their interest in the cause of defeating Alzheimer’s and their concern for the growing number of Idahoans who either have the disease or are touched by it,” Berlin said. “I really appreciated the fact that they knew we were in town and made a special trip to welcome us and show their support.”

(Picture on next page)
The Governor of Idaho Shows His Support

Governor “Butch” Otter autographing Senate Concurrent Resolution 112 with co-sponsors Senators Joyce Broadsword, Dan Schmidt, and IAPG members in attendance. That’s Senator Broadsword to the Governor’s left, then Dr. Toevs and Dr. Rohn are on her left. Cathy McDougall from AARP is standing behind them and that’s Randi Chapman from the National Alzheimer’s Association second person in on the left side of the picture.
(March 27th, 2012)

IAPG Storms the Hill

MacKenzie Rodgers and Mike Berlin at the Capitol to meet with representatives of Idaho’s congressional delegation.
(April 25, 2012)

Meeting with Senator and Mrs. Risch

(Left-to-Right)
MacKenzie Rodgers, Mrs. Jim Risch, Harry Johns (President and CEO, Alzheimer’s Association), United States Senator Jim Risch, Idaho, and Mike Berlin at the Alzheimer’s Advocacy Forum Reception.
(April 24, 2012).
FYI On the Net:

Caring.com is a website that offers a wealth of information about Alzheimer’s disease and gives practical advice for caregivers. Here are some articles you might be interested in:

**Weight Training May Help Prevent, Reverse Cognitive Impairment**


**The Wow-Power of Music for People With Alzheimer’s**


Supporting Partner Organizations and thanks to:

- National and Greater Idaho Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association
- Idaho AARP
- Idaho Commission on Aging
- Boise State University - Center for the Study of Aging

For more information:

To learn more about IAPG and upcoming activities, please visit:

http://www.hs.boisestate.edu/csa/IAPG

To read the NAPA Act, please visit:

http://aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/napa/#DraftNatlPlan

To read the HOPE Act, please visit:

http://www.kintera.org/atf/cf/%7BB96E2E84-AF7D-46569C86-285306F00E19%7D/S.%200738%20-%20HOPE%20for%20Alzheimer%27s%20Act.pdf

To read Idaho Senate Concurrent Resolution 112, please visit: