

Contact: Scott Bryan
Arthritis Foundation
(404) 965-7661
Sbryan@arthritis.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW CONGRESS TO HEAR FROM ADVOCATES FOR LEGISLATION AFFECTING 46 MILLION AMERICANS WITH ARTHRITIS

- Arthritis Prevention, Control and Cure Act Introduced -

WASHINGTON, February 20, 2007 – A record number of Arthritis Foundation advocates will converge on Capitol Hill February 27 and 28, and urge the U.S. Congress to support the Arthritis Prevention, Control and Cure Act (S. 626) introduced last week. It is the first comprehensive federal response to the burden of arthritis in more than 30 years. Advocates also will encourage Congress to invest now in biomedical research and public health strategies, and increase efforts to confront a disease that affects 46 million Americans, including 300,000 children.

The legislation comes at a critical time, with the staggering prevalence of arthritis continuing to rise due to the aging baby boomer population. In addition to the pain and suffering caused by the disease, arthritis also exacts a hefty financial toll. In 2003 (the most recent statistics available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), arthritis costs to the U.S. economy reached an unfathomable \$128 billion.

“We must work together to raise awareness of the seriousness of this devastating disease, while at the same time encouraging our leaders to commit more to arthritis research,” said John H. Klippel, M.D., president and CEO of the Arthritis Foundation. “The Arthritis Prevention, Control and Cure Act offers new hope to the millions of Americans and families living with arthritis as we work to learn more about its causes, develop innovative treatment options and eventually find a cure.”

Currently, National Institutes of Health funding amounts to less than \$8 per person with arthritis. Funding for arthritis research has steadily declined since 2003, despite the year-over-year increases in people diagnosed with arthritis. At the same time, federal appropriations for the public health efforts to help prevent arthritis and further disability have leveled off.

The Arthritis Prevention, Control and Cure Act expands the federal government’s efforts to prevent, treat and find a cure for arthritis. The legislation focuses on three primary areas:

-- more --

- Investing in a nationwide public health initiative designed to reduce the pain and disability of arthritis through early diagnosis and effective treatment of the disease.
- Ensuring the 300,000 children with arthritis in the U.S. have access to care by addressing the nationwide shortage of pediatric rheumatologists (many states do not have a single pediatric rheumatologist to provide care to children in need).
- Improving coordination among federal agencies and the public with regard to the federal investment in arthritis research and public health activities through the formation of an Arthritis Interagency Coordinating Committee.

The Arthritis Prevention, Control and Cure Act (S. 626) was introduced by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D, MA), the chairman of the Senate Health, Education, and Labor Committee and Sen. Kit Bond (R, MO). Those unable to speak directly to their representatives at this year's landmark Advocacy Summit are encouraged to write their representatives. A list of congressional representatives by zip code is available at www.arthritis.org.

About The Arthritis Foundation

The Arthritis Foundation is the leading health organization addressing the needs of some 46 million Americans living with arthritis, the nation's number-one cause of disability. Founded in 1948, with headquarters in Atlanta, the Arthritis Foundation has 46 chapters and 150 community service points located throughout the country.

The Arthritis Foundation is the largest private, not-for-profit contributor to arthritis research in the world, funding more than \$380 million in research grants since 1948. The foundation helps individuals take control of arthritis by providing public health education; pursuing public policy and legislation; and conducting evidence-based programs to improve the quality of life for those living with arthritis. Information is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-800-568-4045 or www.arthritis.org.