Reps. Pascrell, Rooney Announce Introduction of Traumatic Brain Injury Legislation

Bill would establish a national system to collect TBI data in order to assist research efforts

WASHINGTON, DC - As dozens of organizations from across the country descended on Capitol Hill to participate in the 13th annual Brain Injury Awareness Day, U.S. Reps. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ) and Thomas J. Rooney (R-FL), co-chairs of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, today announced the introduction the National Traumatic Brain Injury Research and Treatment Improvement Act of 2014, legislation that would direct the CDC to establish a national system to track the occurrence of traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and collect data to assist research, prevention, and treatment development efforts.

Reps. Pascrell and Rooney were joined at today's announcement by representatives from Brain Injury Association of America, National Association of State Head Injury Administrators and National Disability Rights Network.

"Dealing with the unexpected hardships brought on by a traumatic brain injury takes a tremendous toll on millions of victims and their families each year," said Rep. Pascrell. "We need to ensure the individuals that sustain these devastating injuries have every resource available to them. As much as we have learned about the brain in recent years, there is still a startling gap in available TBI data which limits our understanding of this silent epidemic. Establishing a system to track TBI occurrences would be a boon for brain researchers and hopefully move us closer to finding a cure."

"Tens of thousands of our nation’s troops and veterans suffer from traumatic brain injury," said Rep. Rooney. "As our war fighters return home, we have an obligation to make sure they get the treatment they need – and to do all we can to prevent future brain injuries from occurring
in the first place. While we’ve made significant progress in advancing our understanding of brain injuries, promoting awareness, and expanding treatment options, we still have significant work ahead of us to meet the challenges of preventing and treating TBI. I appreciate Rep. Pascrell’s longstanding efforts and leadership on combating brain injuries, and I’m honored to work with him to advance this bipartisan cause.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 2.4 million TBIs occur each year and 5.3 million Americans live with a lifelong disability as a result of TBI. Despite the pervasiveness of these injuries, there is currently no national surveillance system to track the incidence, prevalence, and circumstances of TBI. The cost to society for medical care and lost wages associated with TBI is $76.3 billion annually.

While the CDC currently assesses the incidence of TBI, these efforts are limited due to a lack of resources. The establishment of a national surveillance system would give the CDC the ability to collect robust, uniform data to help aid TBI research, the development of treatments, and, possibly, a cure.

**The National Traumatic Brain Injury Research and Treatment Improvement Act of 2014** would direct the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to evaluate existing monitoring and data collections systems that track the incidence and circumstances of traumatic brain injury, including concussion; and submit a report to Congress outlining these findings. The legislation would also establish a statistically sound, scientifically credible, integrated surveillance system. This system would, to the extent practicable, track the incidence and prevalence of TBI, as well as important demographic information and other information relevant to analysis on traumatic brain injury.

The introduction of today's legislation was made as dozens of organizations from across the country descended on Capitol Hill to participate in the 13th annual Brain Injury Awareness Day. The purpose of the conference is to educate Members of Congress and their staffs on the full range of effects of brain injury, the challenges and recoveries of persons living with brain injury, and the services and supports available to them.

Reps. Pascrell and Rooney also convened a panel entitled “Returning to Work: Making Headway After Brain Injury,” featuring Sgt. John Irwin, a New Jersey veteran that sustained a brain injury in combat, along with representatives from the Brain Injury Association of America, Kessler Foundation, National Intrepid Center of Excellence for Traumatic Brain Injury, Centers for Disease Control and Wounded Warrior Project. The panelists discussed the challenges of returning to work following a brain injury and what resources are available to them to assist in the transition.

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