

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today marks the beginning of National Kidney Month. To mark that occasion, Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), who is the vice chair of the Congressional Diabetes Caucus, submitted this statement into the congressional record:

“Mr. Speaker, I rise on this first day of National Kidney Month to recognize the efforts of numerous dedicated individuals, many in this body, who work not only to increase awareness about the devastating effects of kidney disease, but who also look for ways to eradicate this debilitating disease once and for all.

“Today, more than 400,000 Americans are living with the wretched pain and horrible inconvenience of kidney failure, leaving them dependent upon life-saving dialysis three to four times each week. Twenty million more have Chronic Kidney Disease, where patients experience a gradual deterioration of kidney function, the end result of which is kidney failure.

“The leading causes of these diseases are diabetes and high blood pressure, which disproportionately affect African Americans and Latinos. Diabetes occurs at twice the rate in the African American community as it does in white Americans. As of 2002, two million Latino adults had been diagnosed with diabetes. High blood pressure is also more prevalent in these communities. In fact, one in three African American adults are affected by high blood pressure. According to the American Heart Association, the prevalence of hypertension in African Americans in the United States is among the highest in the world.

“Both Chronic Kidney Disease and kidney failure disproportionately affect African Americans and Latinos. African Americans make up about 13 percent of the U.S. population but comprise 32 percent of patients treated for kidney failure, giving them a kidney failure rate that is 4.2 times greater than that of white Americans . Among patients with diabetes, Latinos are between 4.5 and 6.6 times more likely to develop kidney disease than non-Hispanic white Americans.

“Given that early kidney disease has no symptoms, most people do not realize that they are in danger of kidney failure. Therefore, it is critically important for all of us, whether it be members of congress, health organizations or our extended families, to do our best to increase awareness of the dangers of kidney disease and encourage our family members, our friends and our neighbors who have high blood pressure and diabetes to ask their doctors to run simple blood and urine tests that can detect potential problems.

“The good news is that once diagnosed, patients can receive high quality care. Individuals with kidney disease who are able to obtain treatment early experience a higher quality of life and are able to maintain more of their day-to-day activities, including keeping their jobs. This is a situation to which an ounce of prevention results in a gallon of future savings, both in quality of life and in hard dollars for individuals and for the government.

“Mr. Speaker, I applaud the goals set forth in observance of National Kidney Month, for we must continue to raise awareness about this important issue and to show support for Americans living with kidney disease. But, I am concerned that in an environment in which our budgetary priorities include cutting funding for the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney

Disease to the tune of \$20 billion in fiscal year 2006 and '07, we are not doing enough to thwart the increase in kidney failure and the conditions from which it results. We cannot ignore the human suffering and financial consequences of kidney failure.

Our failure to make this disease a major legislative priority will cost us greatly in the future.”

Rep. Becerra also wanted to remind readers and constituents that to maintain healthy kidneys, folks should:

- check their blood pressure regularly and work to control high blood pressure;
- avoid the overuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs;
- seek treatment for urinary tract and kidney infections quickly;
- avoid cigarette smoking;
- avoid high sodium foods; and
- drink water instead of caffeinated beverages like soda and coffee.

Becerra.house.gov