

PATRICK MEEHAN  
7TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA



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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-3807

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PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

November 16, 2012

Senator Tom Coburn  
172 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Coburn:

On behalf of the many families suffering from illnesses like pancreatic cancer, I am writing to urge you to lift your objection to the Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act and allow the overwhelming majority of the House and Senate to work its will.

Last year I met with a young constituent named Sienna Gonzales, who traveled to Washington to urge me to support an earlier version of this legislation in honor of her mother, who was battling pancreatic cancer. This bill will require the National Cancer Institute to develop a new scientific framework on research into recalcitrant cancers -- those that are the hardest to understand and the deadliest, with survival rates under 20 percent.

As you know, pancreatic cancer is an especially cruel illness, with the lowest survival rate among the most common forms of cancer. Only six percent of those diagnosed will survive a five-year time period, the vast majority surviving fewer than twelve months. NCI has pointed out that "pancreatic cancer is distinct from other cancers due to its complex biology, the lack of early screening tools, and the absence of effective targeted therapeutic agents." The research agency estimates more than 37,000 Americans will die from the disease this year. The mortality rate is horrific.

The sad truth is that Americans diagnosed with pancreatic cancer are no better off today than if they had received their diagnosis in 1970, despite the four-fold increase in pancreatic cancer research funding in the last decade. Clearly a new course must be charted. The Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act reflects the broad, bipartisan consensus that Congress can and must exercise its constitutional responsibility over the NCI as an executive branch agency.

I appreciate your concern, particularly as a physician and cancer survivor, regarding the Congress micromanaging the scientific decisions of researchers at NCI. That is why House and Senate leaders negotiated compromise language that does not direct research efforts to one illness or another. Rather, it sets public policy that a new approach to recalcitrant cancers is necessary. This is Congress's right and proper role in our constitutional system.

The bill as introduced originally had the support of 300 co-sponsors. The compromise bill passed the House by a unanimous voice vote, and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions approved it by voice vote. It will pass the Senate and be signed into law absent your objection.

This summer, Sienna's mom passed away. Let's honor her memory, and the memory of so many loved and lost, by sending this widely supported and appropriate legislation to the President's desk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patrick Meehan", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Patrick Meehan  
Member of Congress