

For Immediate Release

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**SENATORS STABENOW AND MURKOWSKI REINTRODUCE
HEART FOR WOMEN ACT**

Federal bill aims to reduce cardiovascular disease death rates in women

(Washington, March 2, 2011)—U.S. Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) today reintroduced legislation to ensure that heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are more widely recognized and effectively treated in women.

The Heart disease Education, Research and Analysis, and Treatment (HEART) for Women Act would make sure that healthcare data reported to the federal government is classified by gender, race and ethnicity. It would also require the U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary to submit an annual report to Congress on the quality of and access to care for women with CVD. Additionally, the measure would expand eligibility for funding to all 50 states for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WISEWOMAN screening program for low-income, underinsured uninsured women. Currently the program is available in only 20 states.

“Unfortunately, a majority of women and even some physicians are unfamiliar with the symptoms, diagnoses, and dangers of heart disease in women,” said Senator Stabenow. “The HEART for Women Act will help educate women and their doctors, increase access to screenings for women, and expand gender-specific analysis and research, so we are better equipped to fight this disease and save lives.”

Every 60 seconds, someone's mother, daughter, wife or sister dies from heart disease, stroke or other forms of CVD in the U.S. These diseases claim the lives of more than 422,000 American women each year—more than the next four causes of death combined. Nearly half of all African-American women have some form of cardiovascular disease, compared to 34 percent of white women. But according to the 2011 American Heart Association CVD prevention guidelines for women, helping women and their doctors understand risks and taking practical steps can be most effective in preventing heart disease and stroke.

“Cardiovascular disease, often called the “silent killer,” takes the life of one woman nearly every minute,” said Senator Murkowski. “The HEART for Women Act gives more women access to the WISEWOMAN program that provides free heart disease and stroke prevention screening to low-income, uninsured women. Passage of this legislation will ensure that health care providers have greater access to life-saving drugs and screening services to prevent the rise of cardiovascular disease in women.”

The HEART for Women Act is endorsed by more than 40 leading health organizations including the American Heart Association, Society for Women's Health Research and WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease.

“With nearly one in three women dying from heart disease and stroke each year, we are pleased to see the U.S. Senate put forth legislation that will help save lives,” said Ralph L. Sacco, M.D., American Heart Association President. “The HEART for Women Act supports and recognizes women’s unique health needs, which is critical in eliminating inequities and improving the treatment, diagnosis and prevention of America’s leading health threats.”

“Cardiovascular disease continues to be the number one killer of women and the recent re-introduction of the HEART for Women Act shows a renewed commitment to raising awareness, improving treatment options and educating women on prevention and care,” said Phyllis Greenberger, M.S.W., President and CEO of the Society for Women’s Health Research. “We must ensure that the Food and Drug Administration is documenting sex based differences in medications and devices, specifically on heart disease and women.”

“Women are underrepresented in cardiovascular trials and there is a serious lapse in enforcement of rules requiring new drug applicants to submit data by sex, age group and race, said Lisa M. Tate, Chief Executive Office of WomenHeart. “As a result, female heart patients are treated with drugs, procedures and devices that have been shown to be effective in men, yet not studied in a sufficient number of women. The HEART for Women Act will ensure that results of cardiovascular trials are reported by sex and that women get the best possible care for their heart health,” Tate continued.

For more information, visit www.heartforwomen.org.

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