

October 5, 2004

Congressman Todd Akin Votes to Advance Fight Against Diabetes

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Todd Akin said that today's House passage of the Pancreatic Islet Cell Transplantation Act "is a significant step toward providing a leading edge diabetes treatment to many of the nation's 17 million diabetes patients."

This legislation, introduced by Congressman George Nethercutt (R-WA) and cosponsored by Akin, amends the Public Health Service Act so that organ procurement organizations will be given certification credit for collecting pancreases for islet cell transplantation or research. This simple change will increase pancreas collection for islet transplants, thus making the protocol more available to diabetics.

Under what is known as the "Edmonton Protocol," pancreatic islets are taken from the pancreas of a cadaver and are transplanted into the liver of the patient. Although patients must take immunosuppressant drugs for most of their lives, in many cases the patient is freed of the daily burden of diabetes.

"By improving access to pancreatic islets, we can help numerous Americans live diabetes free. As more patients have access to this treatment we will see more diabetic children and adults abandoning their insulin pumps, pin pricks and shots. While we must continue to search for cures for this terrible disease, this treatment is an example of one of the avenues for cures founded in sound ethics and promising science," Akin noted.

The bill now awaits consideration in the Senate.