Breast Cancer Research Stamp

I recently received a letter from a constituent on a plain white envelope. In the corner was a brightly colored Breast Cancer Research Stamp. I always smile when I see one of these because I know that each one brings us closer to finding a cure for breast cancer.

In 1998, I heard from breast cancer survivors and family members of women who succumbed to the disease, offering their stories in support of a proposed Breast Cancer Research Stamp. Their efforts were rewarded when the stamp became the first-ever "semipostal," meaning the 55-cent stamp does more than just cover first-class postage.

Of the remaining 11 cents, about 8 cents go into the National Institutes of Health and about 3 cents go to the Department of Defense, both of which conduct breast cancer research.

11 cents may sound like small change, but all told, the stamp has raised more than $73 million for breast cancer research.

Breast cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among women in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say that breast cancer remains the most common cancer among women.

More than 2 million women have been diagnosed with breast cancer, and as many as a million more may not know they have it. A lesser-known fact is that over one thousand men will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year.

According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, more than 200,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, and more than 40,000 will die.

Yet if detected early, the five-year survival rate exceeds 95 percent. And while mammograms are among the best early detection methods, 13 million women older than 40 have never had one.

Thanks to breakthroughs in cancer research, more and more women are surviving this deadly disease. And every dollar we raise helps us save more lives.

We all need a stamp at one time or another, and the Breast Cancer Research Stamp is an easy way to contribute to an important cause.

It is my hope the Breast Cancer Research Stamp will help to continue public awareness on this devastating disease and provide hope to breast cancer survivors.

Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator

The Breast Cancer Research Stamp

The idea behind the stamp originated in California. It came from a Sacramento breast cancer surgeon, Dr. Ernie Bodai, who has treated over 7,000 women with breast cancer. Ernie teamed with Betsy Mullen, a breast cancer survivor from San Diego, and David Goodman, who lost his wife to breast cancer and hails from Orinda, to advocate on behalf of the stamp.

The stamp was designed by Ethel Kessler of Bethesda, Maryland, and illustrated by Whitney Sherman of Baltimore, Maryland. This is the first stamp design by Kessler, who has a personal interest in helping raise awareness about breast cancer as she is a survivor of the disease.

I worked with former Senators Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and Lauch Faircloth (R-N.C.) to craft the original Senate legislation to authorize the stamp, while the House legislation was sponsored by former Representatives Vic Fazio (D-Sacramento) and Susan Molinari (R-N.Y.).

Since 1998, when the stamp was first issued, legislation to reauthorize the stamp has been passed six times. The stamp is currently authorized to run through the end of 2011. In the 112th Congress, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas) and I re-introduced legislation to extend the authorization of the Breast Cancer Research Stamp for four additional years - until 2015.

A Record of Success

The breast cancer stamp costs 55 cents and is deemed valid as a 44-cent first-class stamp. The additional 11 cents charged for each stamp goes to research. It is important to note that this stamp does not replace the regular priced first class stamp, but simply gives buyers the option to purchase a new stamp to raise funds to fight a cancer that impacts the lives of so many American families.

To date, the stamp has raised more than $73 million to find a cure for the disease. More than 908 million stamps have been sold.

Seventy percent of the research funds generated by the stamp are directed to research programs at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The remaining 30 percent of the research funds are directed to the Department of Defense breast cancer research program.

The breast cancer research stamp was the first stamp in our nation's history dedicated to raising funds for a special cause. The stamp's success has inspired other fundraising stamps including the Heroes of 2001 stamp, which raised money for the family of emergency personnel who died or were disabled during the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

Despite increases in the last few years, research dollars are still desperately needed to fund cancer research.

I pledge to continue my support of this unique postal stamp by championing legislation to ensure the stamp's reauthorization.

As of January 2010, nearly $70 million has been raised for breast cancer research. The breast cancer research stamp has been re-authorized through 2011.

And through the efforts and hard work of Dr. Bodai, the Breast Cancer Research Stamp has now been issued in over a dozen countries, including Hungary, Belize, Grenada, the Gambia, Micronesia, Kenya, Kosovo and El Salvador, to raise awareness and funding to fight this disease worldwide. All of the funds raised in each country stay in that country.

"Today, thanks to breakthroughs in cancer research, more and more people are becoming cancer survivors rather than cancer victims. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are 11 million cancer survivors in the U.S. today. Every dollar we can raise through these stamps to fight breast cancer will help save lives."

- Senator Dianne Feinstein

U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
http://feinstein.senate.gov

107006 4/11