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## **King Fights to Protect the Elderly from Abuse and Exploitation**

*Reintroduces bill to protect American seniors and improve long-term care*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Representative Peter King (R-NY) reintroduced the *Elder Justice Act (H.R. 2006)* - the first comprehensive federal effort to address and prevent elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. It is estimated that over 5 million American seniors fall victim to abuse and neglect each year, yet an overwhelming majority of these cases go unreported. The *Elder Justice Act* aims to make communities safer for older Americans by developing new strategies and requiring prompt reporting of crimes in nursing homes. King has been pushing for the passage of this legislation since it was first introduced in 2003.

“Our aging population is growing, and with that, so are the incidents of elder abuse and neglect,” said King. “We must take action to put an end these terrible injustices against the elderly, or the problem will continue to get worse. Our seniors have the right to live out their lives in a safe environment with access to the best care possible, and that is why I will keep up the fight to pass the Elder Justice Act and sign it into law.”

If enacted into law, the *Elder Justice Act* would provide federal resources to state and community officials who currently grapple with elder abuse with scarce means and fragmented systems. Mechanisms for identifying and tracking elder abuse indicate that many instances of injustice are not reported for appropriate prosecution.

This legislation has been endorsed by the Elder Justice Coalition, a national membership organization comprised of 584 groups dedicated to eliminating elder abuse, neglect and exploitation in America, including the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, National Association of Adult Protective Service Administrators, National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, AARP, National Association of State Ombudsman Programs and the National Association of State Units on Aging.

“The Elder Justice Coalition hails the reintroduction of the Elder Justice Act in the House and urges its prompt passage,” said Robert Blancato, National Coordinator for the Elder Justice Coalition. “We believe that the rapid rise in elder abuse in our nation mandates that Congress finally pass this bill to commit necessary federal resources to this crisis.

The Coalition has special praise for the longstanding and steadfast leadership of Rep. Peter King the author of the legislation and also salutes the lead co-sponsors of the bill Reps. Jan Schakowsky and Tammy Baldwin.”

**Some of the bill’s provisions include measures to:**

- Establish an Elder Justice Coordinating Council to make recommendations to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on the coordination of activities of the Federal, State, local and private agencies and entities relating to elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Improve the quality of information and research related to elder abuse.
- Create new forensic expertise in elder abuse (similar to that in child abuse) that will promote detection and increase the capacity to prosecute offenders. New programs will train health professionals in both forensic pathology and geriatrics.
- Establish penalties and prosecution for failure to promptly report crimes in long-term care facilities. The act will require reporting of crimes in nursing homes on an official federal website.
- Provide a first-time direct funding stream for Adult Protective Services (APS) - \$100 million a year for four years.
- Establish an advisory board to create a short- and long-term multidisciplinary strategic plan for the developing field of elder justice.
- Authorize \$72.5 million over four years for national organizations or states that represent or train long-term care ombudsman representatives to provide training, technical assistance, demonstration programs and research to improve ombudsman effectiveness in addressing abuse and neglect in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.
- Authorize \$67.5 million over four years in grants to enhance long-term care staffing through training and recruitment to establish employee incentives including career and wage benefit ladders and programs to improve management practices.

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