



Congressman Donald Payne

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Congressman Payne, First Lady Laura Bush Raise Awareness Global Malaria Epidemic

Washington, DC – Today, Congressman Donald M. Payne, was joined by First Lady Laura Bush, at the official launch of the Congressional Malaria Caucus, which he will co-chair. Other participants in the event with Representative Payne, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, included caucus co-chair Congressman John Boozman (AR-3), Admiral Ziemer, Coordinator of the President's Malaria Initiative, Ray Chambers, United Nations Special Envoy on Malaria, and American Idol finalist Melinda Doolittle.

Malaria is a global emergency. Each year, more than 1 million people die from the disease and approximately 300 – 500 million people are newly infected. Africa is hardest hit, accounting for between 85% and 90% of malaria deaths, mostly among children. Pregnant women and children are the most vulnerable when it comes to the disease. Congressman Payne stated, "Health experts estimate that every 30 seconds an African child dies from malaria. These statistics are absolutely staggering."

The Congressional Malaria Caucus aims to raise awareness of the United States' and the international community's fight against the malaria epidemic and to support increased efforts to stem its tide. It recognizes that though real progress has been made, much more must be done. The caucus supports the deployment of key malaria interventions including insecticide-treated nets and effective medications and the strong funding of bi- and multi-lateral programs including the President's Malaria Initiative and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Representative Payne asserted, "Malaria is a disease of poverty – they both can result from and exacerbate the other. Poorer countries are more susceptible because they typically lack the necessary healthcare infrastructure to deliver cheap, cost-effective prophylaxis and treatment. Malaria also constrains economic development because resources must be redirected towards prevention and treatment and away from education and the workforce."

"It is a great honor to have First Lady Laura Bush here on Capitol Hill today for such a worthy cause. It is high-level involvement that can help mobilize the needed resources," Payne stated. "Great strides have been made in the fight against malaria. Thanks to programs through the President's Malaria Initiative, Malaria No More and other partners we have achieved significant success. We can, relatively cheaply, put an end to this epidemic but we must leverage all available resources."

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