



**Congressional Briefing
Biographies of Honorary Co-Chairs
July 15, 2010**

Senator Robert Menendez

Senator Menendez's story is a quintessential American story. He grew up the son of immigrants in a tenement building in Union City and has risen to become one of 100 United States Senators and a member of the Senate leadership. He has earned the reputation of a fighter for New Jersey families who puts their economic security and hometown security ahead of powerful special interests.

Senator Robert Menendez is a staunch advocate for individuals with autism and their families. He has been widely recognized for his leadership on promoting safe and healthy families. He has championed legislation to support mothers suffering from postpartum depression, help families overcome the challenges of autism, and educate kids about Internet safety. Specifically, he introduced the Helping HANDS for Autism Act which increases housing, awareness, and navigation demonstration services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Senator Menendez is also a proud cosponsor of the Autism Treatment Acceleration Act that would create a comprehensive strategy to address the needs of families affected by autism spectrum disorder. This important bill requires health insurers to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism and authorizes federal funding for a wide range of service, treatment, support and research initiatives.

Senator Menendez, a member of the Senate Finance Committee, made a tremendous effort and was able to include behavioral health treatment as part of the essential health benefits package required for certain health plans in the new health care reform law. He also gained inclusion of over a dozen of his amendments to reduce costs and protect families. On Autism Awareness Day of this year, Senator Menendez was joined by U.S. Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr., Dr. Sandra Harris, Founder and Executive Director of the Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center, advocates, and parents, to commemorate the beginning of Autism Awareness Month. In his remarks, Senator Menendez stated:

"We're here today on the first day of Autism Awareness Month because there's nothing more important than the health, well-being, and hope for families who live with autism every day," said Senator Menendez. "I've heard from so many parents who have shared their heart-wrenching struggles -- not only with the disease -- but with the complexities of a health care system that often leaves them feeling lost. It's time we do more to help these families and that's exactly what I'm committed to doing."

Senator Menendez currently serves on the following Senate Committees: Finance; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; Energy and Natural Resources; and Foreign Relations. He is also the Chairman of the Banking Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development; and the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Development and Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs, and International Environmental Protection. He also serves as a member of the Senate Democratic leadership as the Chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC).

Congressman Mike Doyle

Mike Doyle is currently serving his eighth term in Congress representing the 14th District of Pennsylvania, which includes the city of Pittsburgh as well as communities in the western, southern, and eastern portions of Allegheny County.

Congressman Doyle serves on the exclusive House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over many important legislative issue areas, including health care, energy, the environment, telecommunications, commerce, trade, and consumer protection. He was actively involved in drafting the health care reform and clean energy legislation passed by the House in 2009. One of Congressman Doyle's top priorities in Congress has always been ensuring that every American has access to affordable, high-quality health care, and he has been particularly active over the years in working to enact federal policies and programs that help families that have one or more members with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

In 2001, Representative Doyle joined Representative Chris Smith to found and co-chair the first-ever Congressional Membership Organization dedicated to autism advocacy on Capitol Hill—The Coalition for Autism Research and Education (CARE). Over 150 Members of Congress from over 40 states are currently members of this bipartisan, bicameral effort, and Congressmen Doyle and Smith continue to co-chair the caucus.

The Caucus under Congressman Doyle's leadership has been successful in meeting many of these goals. For example, it led the successful Congressional effort to increase funding for autism research fivefold over the last 10 years.

In addition, the caucus succeeded in enacting the Combating Autism Act (S. 843) in 2006. This legislation authorized \$860 million through 2011 in federal funding for research and diagnostics related to autism spectrum disorder, early identification of autism, and promotes early intervention. It also established a state-level clearing house for information on autism.

Starting in 2007, the annual appropriations bill for the Department of Defense has included funds for autism-related research. This funding, allotted under the Army's Research, Development, Education, and Training Center, supports research on autism spectrum disorders in the military. The findings, however, also benefit the broader autism community as well.

Most recently, the comprehensive health care reform legislation signed into law in March 2010 contained a provision championed by Congressman Doyle to outlaw discrimination against individuals with autism by health insurance providers.

The Caucus is currently working to enact two major new pieces of legislation:

Congressman Doyle has introduced the Expanding the Promise for Individuals with Autism Act (H.R. 2413), legislation to improve and coordinate the care that individuals with autism receive, improve the dissemination of information between autism researchers and service providers, improve training for professionals treating autism spectrum disorders, and mandate that health insurers cover the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders.

Congressman Doyle is the primary co-sponsor of The Global Autism Assistance Act (H.R. 1878), a bill to fund programs in the developing world to raise autism awareness and create new ways to share American expertise and advancements in the diagnoses and treatment of autism with families and medical professionals in countries that have yet to focus on the worldwide increase in the prevalence of autism.