

Castle, House Vote to Bar Discrimination on Basis of Genetic History -- MAY 1, 2008

CASTLE, HOUSE VOTE TO BAR DISCRIMINATION ON BASIS OF GENETIC HISTORY

Washington, DC -- Today Congressman Michael Castle (R-DE) voted in favor of H.R. 493, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA). GINA bars health insurance companies, employers and labor unions from discriminating on the basis of genetic history and will now go to the President's desk where he is expected to sign it into law.

"Many Americans are faced with the unfortunate reality that they are at high-risk for certain health problems or disease, simply based upon their family history. This bill will improve people's health by enabling Americans to share in the medical benefits that have come with genetic research without fear. As a longtime supporter of this legislation, I believe it is vital that we protect all Americans from discrimination, regardless of their genetic predisposition to health problems," said Rep. Castle. "Fear of genetic discrimination can discourage people from undergoing crucial testing for health problems or diseases, and impacts the critical research undertaken by the NIH to prevent, treat, and provide eventual cures for a host of diseases. It has been a long road to get to this point and I am glad to see GINA finally signed into law. "

There are over 1,236 predictive genetic tests, which can determine whether a person is at risk for specific diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's. Such information enables people to take preventive measures to prevent the onset of the disease or delay it.

Delaware currently prohibits genetic discrimination by insurance companies and employers. Many other states have laws banning genetic discrimination in hiring, firing, and terms of employment and 46 have laws that ban health insurers from discriminating on the basis of genetic information. This bill provides a federal standard for such non-discrimination laws.

Among other provisions, specifically HR 493 will:

- Bar genetic discrimination
- Prohibit insurance companies, employers and labor unions from discriminating on the basis of individual's genetic information.

###