

## **News Regarding the Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act**

On February 15, 2005, U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY-22) reintroduced the Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act (HR818) for the 109<sup>th</sup> congress. If enacted, HR818 would add coverage for acupuncture services to Medicare and the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program, and would provide access to acupuncture for Medicare's 40 million beneficiaries and the nine million federal workers, their dependents and retirees who covered under FEHB.

Congressman Hinchey has continued his advocacy for acupuncture. He introduced the Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act in 1993 when he was first elected to congress. Support for the bill had been modest, but has grown steadily in every successive congress, just as public acceptance of acupuncture has grown over the past dozen years. Although Hinchey's bill garnered only 5 cosponsors during the first term it was introduced (out of 435 members of the House), its supporters numbered 63 at the end of the 108<sup>th</sup> congress in December 2004.

The bill has been cosponsored by 44 Congressmen/Congresswomen (by August 14, 2005). Our goal is to secure the 100 cosponsors that the bill deserves placement on a committee agenda for hearing and possible vote. The goal is realizable, but it needs supports from acupuncture practitioners (including licensed acupuncturists and physician certified acupuncturists) and acupuncture patients.

We are looking forward to more Congress members' cosponsoring. Seniors and federal employees should have the freedom to choose acupuncture. For their health benefits and acupuncturist's professional benefits, we urge you to contact (write a letter or make a phone call) with your U.S. Representative asking him/her to cosponsor the Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act.