

ISSUE BRIEF

Congressional Hearing Health Caucus

Action

Urge your Representative to join the Hearing Health Caucus.

Background

Representatives Tom Latham (R-IA) and Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) revived the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus (CHHC) in 2012 to broaden support and knowledge of hearing health issues within Congress. The CHHC aims to provide an educational setting for discussion of issues related to hearing health. While only members of the House of Representatives can be in the caucus, informing Senate offices about it may encourage them to introduce a similar group in the Senate.

Hearing loss is a serious health condition that impacts more than 34 million Americans; however, it is often overlooked when health care issues are considered in Congress. In fact, hearing loss is among the most prevalent birth conditions in America—affecting 3 in 1,000 births. An increasing number of younger people are experiencing hearing loss caused by exposure to loud noise. In addition, hearing loss and tinnitus (ringing in the ears) are the number one injury that soldiers experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is estimated that untreated hearing impairment costs the U.S. economy \$56 billion in lost productivity, special education, and medical care.

Traditionally, statistics on hearing loss have shown seniors to be the most vulnerable age group affected. However, over the past 3 decades there has been a sharp increase in the number of younger Americans with hearing difficulties. According to a poll commissioned by ASHA and conducted by Zogby International, more than half of high school students surveyed reported at least one symptom of hearing loss. The poll looked at the usage habits of high school students and adults with respect to some popular technology that provides audio through earphones (e.g., MP3 players). The survey results have increased the public's awareness of the potential for hearing loss from such devices.

The occurrence of hearing loss in Americans spans a range of age and occupational groups—including infants, school-aged students and adults, war veterans, and seniors. It is more important than ever for your Representative to join the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus to support hearing health issues in Congress.

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Reference

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2006). *Survey of teens and adults about the use of personal electronic devices and head phones*. Retrieved from www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/about/news/atitbtot/zogby_survey2006.pdf.