

### **Society of Interventional Radiology Supports Congressional Stroke Legislation to Increase Public Awareness and Improve Treatment for Nation's #3 Killer**

FAIRFAX, Va., Dec. 30 – Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR) applauds newly-introduced U.S. House and Senate stroke legislation. These bills can boost stroke awareness, diagnosis, treatment and recovery. *The Stroke Treatment and Ongoing Prevention Act of 2003* (H.R.3658, STOP Stroke Act) was introduced in December and the Senate's version (S.1909) was initiated in November. SIR has worked closely with congressional leaders, throughout 2003, toward these important milestones.

SIR especially commends the bipartisan leadership of Representatives Lois Capps, (D-CA), Charles "Chip" Pickering, Jr.(R-MS), John Dingell (D-MI), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Nathan Deal (D-GA), Henry Waxman (D-CA), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Bart Gordon (D-TN), Eliot Engle (D-NY), Al Wynn (D-MD), Gene Green (D-TX), Mike Doyle (D-PA), Tom Allen (D-ME), Janice Schakowsky (D-IL) and Hilda Solis (D-CA). Senators Thad Cochran, (R-MS), and Edward Kennedy (D-MA), were also instrumental in introducing broader, but closely related legislation in the Senate. As cosponsors, these leaders are addressing a health issue that kills nearly half of those it strikes.

"There are other unsung heroes as well," noted SIR Executive Director Peter Lauer. He explained, "The House bill would not have been possible without Health Chair Mike Bilirakis (R-FL) and Energy & Commerce Chair W.J. "Billy" Tauzin (R-LA) and their staffs." Additionally, SIR commends its dedicated *Stroke Coalition* partners, an ad-hoc group of stroke survivors, families and medical professionals working with the *American Heart Association* to help enact a viable stroke bill in 2004. "Much lies ahead," Lauer noted. "The New Year will be critical."

With stroke treatment, time is brain. "The more folks know about stroke, the faster they'll seek treatment," explained George A. Fueredi, MD, SIR's Government Affairs and Health Care Policy Chair. "That's often the difference between a fatality and recovery. This legislation helps ensure that patients and health care professionals can better tackle America's number three killer. Every 45 seconds, someone suffers a stroke. More than a million Americans endure its disabilities. It's a medical emergency that needs to be addressed and these bills are a real start."

Stroke occurs when blood vessels supplying the brain are either blocked or burst. Either starves the brain of vital oxygen and nutrients. If deprived for even a short time, brain cells will start to die. Injury to these cells jeopardizes the functions they control, which can result in paralysis, language, motor skill, vision loss, or worse.

Interventional radiologists are a critical part of hospital stroke teams. These doctors specialize in neurological procedures utilizing advanced imaging to guide a catheter to tiny brain arteries. They can deliver anti-coagulating drugs directly on the stroke clot or break it up mechanically while avoiding invasive surgery. These treatments restore blood flow to the brain.

More information on stroke and minimally invasive treatments can be found at [www.SIRweb.org](http://www.SIRweb.org).