Cancer Moonshot Task Force and Vice President Detail Necessary Next Steps to Accelerate Cancer Research and Prevention

Advocacy affiliate calls on Congress and state lawmakers to provide necessary funding and take swift action to act to begin implementing recommendations

Washington, D.C.—October 17, 2016—Today the National Cancer Moonshot Task Force and Vice President Biden released recommendations aimed at accelerating progress in cancer in the next five years. The Task Force report followed recommendations from a Blue Ribbon panel last month.

The report acknowledges the progress that has been undertaken in the last year and highlights specific additional activity that will be crucial to address the following five strategic goals set forth to end cancer as we know it: catalyze new scientific breakthroughs, unleash the power of data, accelerate bringing new therapies to patients, strengthen prevention and diagnosis, and improve patient access and care.

Among the recommendations, the panel suggests implementing proven cancer prevention, including increasing HPV vaccination rates by expanding efforts to support states, removing barriers to access to tobacco cessation for those enrolled in Medicaid, and expanding colorectal cancer screening efforts across the country in line with the American Cancer Society's "80% by 2018" initiative.

"We know that about half of cancer deaths could be prevented through early detection, living a healthy lifestyle and getting access to the best treatment," said Rich Wender, chief cancer control officer for the American Cancer Society. "The Task Force recommendations shine an important light on specific steps that can be acted upon immediately that to exponentially reduce the cancer burden in this country."

The Task Force also acknowledges the critical importance of the Affordable Care Act in improving access to recommended health care along the cancer journey for many who were previously unable to access health care coverage because of a pre-existing condition. The Task Force makes additional recommendations to improve efficiencies of existing programs and expand current efforts to increase access to health care and find new ways of ensuring each and every patient receives quality care during treatment and survivorship.

Among other highlights from the report, the Task Force notes the critical need to make clinical research trials more accessible to cancer patients and further addresses the need to comprehensively identify cancer survivorship issues and develop solutions to improve health outcomes for cancer survivors. Reducing disparities in access and improving survivorship are top priorities for ACS and ACS CAN.

"The Task Force report truly underscores the tremendous opportunity we have to apply what we know and reinvigorate the resources necessary to promote additional discovery," said Gary Reedy, CEO of the American Cancer Society and American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. "With the vice president's continued leadership and a desire across the country to make eliminating this disease a national priority in the coming years, our potential to end cancer as we know it is at hand."

A number of the panel's recommendations could be acted upon quickly through legislation that is currently pending in Congress. The report specifically calls out an opportunity to close a loophole in Medicare that results in seniors facing unexpected and expensive cost-sharing when a polyp is removed during a routine screening colonoscopy. By removing that cost sharing, seniors on a fixed budget won't put off, or worse skip, recommended colon cancer screening because of cost-sharing they can't afford.

ACS CAN calls on Congress to close the loophole and further urges lawmakers to commit to ensure that the National Cancer Institute receives the additional $680 million in moonshot funding included in the president's FY 2017 budget to ensure that promising research can be fully executed.

"We are all one degree from someone with cancer – a loved one, friend or coworker, or have received a personal diagnosis," Reedy said. "The Cancer Moonshot Task Force has laid out sound recommendations that should

provide hope to the more than 1.7 million who will be newly diagnosed with cancer in America this year that if we put our collective efforts together, we can conquer cancer in our lifetime.”