



The Voice Of All Kidney Patients™

Roberta Wager, RN, MSN
President

September 22, 2008

VIA FACSIMILE

Stephen Z. Fadem, MD, FACP
Vice President

Senator Hillary Clinton
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-3204

Carolyn G. Price
Vice President

Dear Senator Clinton:

Kelly M. Mayo, MS
Treasurer

On behalf of the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP), I am writing to urge you to support legislation sponsored by Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA), the Organ Donation Clarification Act of 2008, to provide incentives for critically-needed life-saving organ donations.

Amy Friedman, MD
Secretary

Currently, the U.S. is nearing a grim medical milestone: over 99,000 Americans now wait for a new kidney, liver, heart, or lungs. Over three-fourths of those on the national list are waiting for a kidney: that's 75,000 patients in need of a kidney transplant today. Only one in four of those on the list will get a kidney transplant this year. That means, tragically, that every day eleven people die waiting for a kidney that never arrives.

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As the waiting list for organs grows ever longer, it is time to allow government controlled trials of financial incentives to help increase the number of organ donors. A financial incentive is not necessarily a cash payment: for example, a donor could receive something as simple as lifelong health insurance, or families could receive funeral benefits for deceased donors.

Medical Advisory Board:

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But the 1984 National Organ Transplant Act prohibits financial consideration of any kind. In the 1990s, the state of Pennsylvania tried to give funeral benefits to families of organ donors but ran afoul of the national 1984 law. Senator Specter's bill would alter the legislative landscape such that it would not be a criminal act for donors to receive compensation from federal or state governments. This action is necessary to clear the way for pilot studies of incentives.

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AAKP has long supported this approach. On June 16, the American Medical Association also adopted a policy calling for the modification of current law to allow pilot studies on financial incentives for organ donation. The idea is admittedly not a new one, but it is an idea whose time has come.

On behalf of millions of kidney patients across the country, I ask you to support this important life-saving legislation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or John Schall at 202-626-8598 or jschall@jeffersongr.com.

Sincerely,

Roberta Wager, RN, MSN
President

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