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**COPD Foundation Engages in Grassroots Advocacy Efforts  
on World COPD Day, November COPD Awareness Month**

**Washington, D.C. (November 12, 2009)**—The COPD Foundation is hosting several events throughout November COPD Awareness Month. Coordinated by the Foundation’s grassroots advocacy program, Operation 435, these events include a series of simultaneous efforts throughout the nation on World COPD Day, November 18<sup>th</sup>.

Operation 435 is designed to empower patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) to get involved in the fight for their cause, especially on a local level. There are 435 congressional districts in the U.S. and the Foundation aims to engage them all.

Created to address multiple issues facing the COPD community, Operation 435’s first initiative is to collect names in a petition to show legislators and public officials that COPD is a growing concern affecting millions of Americans, in every state, in every congressional district.

“It goes back to this basic issue: COPD places a significant burden on our country,” says Joe LaMountain, Director of Patient Advocacy for the COPD Foundation. “If thousands of COPDers sign their names on the *Stop COPD!* Petition, they’ll show their local and national leaders that people in their districts are concerned about COPD,” he says.

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, members of the COPD community, which includes patients, their family members, friends and health care providers, will be meeting with their state’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) coordinator.

BRFSS is a state-based system of health surveys conducted by state health departments that collects information on health risk behaviors, preventative health practices and health care access primarily related to chronic disease and injury. Each state conducts an annual BRFSS. For many states it is the only available source of timely accurate data on health-related behaviors.

The purpose of the November 18<sup>th</sup> meetings is to have questions about COPD added to each state’s BRFSS survey. This will ensure that for much needed COPD data is obtained,

allowing for the design of a public health infrastructure to address COPD. In other words, without the data collected from these surveys, it is almost impossible to know exactly what local COPD communities need in regards to their care.

The demand for state level data is considerable and growing among public health practitioners. The inclusion of a question in the BRFSS is essential to calculating a state's COPD prevalence levels because it provides data consistently. This allows state health department officials to analyze trends throughout time.

The data is also important because it will allow these public health professionals to develop programs and policies that will prevent new COPD cases and manage current COPD patients in their states.

Miriam O'Day, Senior Director of Public Policy for the COPD Foundation, says the goal of this current Operation 435 initiative is to help bring attention to the states that need to include COPD questions in their BRFSS.

"I think COPDers can reach out to their members of Congress and emphasize to them the need to have a fully funded program at the CDC in the chronic disease division," she says. "The first thing these officials need to do is put together a national action plan. Then let's move forward. Let's shift the paradigm and move away from shame and blame to focus on prevention, treatment and management of COPD."

Currently the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) do not have a dedicated program for COPD. This lack of funding has been a challenge in developing state-based COPD programs. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) recently awarded funds to the CDC to be disseminated to state health departments in order to incorporate a COPD module in their BRFSS to begin surveillance of COPD in their respective populations.

For more information about the World COPD Day Operation 435 activities, visit [www.operation435.org](http://www.operation435.org) or call 1-866-316-COPD (2673).

**About the COPD Foundation:**

The COPD Foundation is dedicated to developing and supporting programs which improve the quality of life through research, education, early diagnosis, and enhanced therapy for persons whose lives are impacted by Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). The COPD Foundation has several programs dedicated to informing, empowering, educating, and engaging individuals affected by COPD, including both diagnosed and undiagnosed individuals, their families and friends, and their medical professionals. For more information, please visit: [www.copdfoundation.org](http://www.copdfoundation.org).

**About COPD:**

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is the fourth leading cause of death in the U.S. and the only chronic disease growing in mortality. It affects approximately 24 million Americans but only 12 million are diagnosed. COPD includes chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and adult onset (refractory) asthma. Symptoms include breathlessness, wheezing, and chronic coughing. For more information about COPD, visit [www.copdfoundation.org](http://www.copdfoundation.org) or call 1-866-316-COPD (2673).

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