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Congressman Jim Ramstad Honored by Suicide Prevention Action Network USA for Mental Health Parity Efforts

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 19, 2007 — U.S. Rep. Jim Ramstad, R-Minnesota, and U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, today were honored for their work on suicide prevention as "Allies for Action" by the Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA), the nation's leading grassroots advocacy organization working to advance public policies that prevent suicide.

"Sen. Harkin and Rep. Ramstad have led the way in raising awareness about suicide," Jerry Reed, SPAN USA's executive director, said. "We appreciate their dedication to passing critical legislation to reduce suicide among veterans and to ensure mental health parity."

Rep. Ramstad introduced The Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act (H.R. 1424) earlier this year to ensure greater access to mental health care and substance use treatment. Rep. Ramstad has also introduced the Keeping Families Together Act (H.R. 687) which would establish a state family support grant program to end the practice of parents giving legal custody of their seriously emotionally disturbed children to state agencies for the purpose of obtaining mental health services for those children.

"I'm both humbled and gratified to be honored by SPAN USA, an organization that I deeply respect for its critical efforts to prevent suicide and enact mental health parity," Rep. Ramstad said.

Sen. Harkin introduced The Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act (S. 479) earlier this year, which directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement a comprehensive program to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans.

In addition, U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Oregon, gave welcoming remarks at the Congressional luncheon, which is part of SPAN USA's annual national awareness and training event "Building Hope for the Future" in Washington D.C. to raise awareness about the toll of suicide and the need for suicide prevention initiatives.

More information about the four-day event is available at www.spanusa.org/spate.

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SPAN USA is the nation's only suicide prevention organization dedicated to leveraging grassroots support among suicide survivors and others to advance public policies that prevent suicide. Since its founding nine years ago, SPAN USA has led the drive to make suicide a public health priority by building political will and calling for the development and implementation of a national strategy for suicide prevention. Using its extensive grassroots network of survivors and advocates, SPAN USA has actively promoted the cause on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures. For more information, please visit www.spanusa.org.

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