

1997 Public Service Award: the Honorable Steny H. Hoyer

Presented by Rhys Jones, DDS, MS, Immediate Past President

The American Association of Public Health Dentistry Public Service Award is presented annually to an individual for substantial contributions through action related to public health dentistry issues.

Each spring at our mid-year meeting of the officers and Executive Council, we discuss potential candidates for each of our awards. Of course, when we present an award, we hope the recipient can be in attendance at the Annual Meeting to receive the award personally. So, last May at our mid-year meeting, we think—Public Service Award—October—Washington, DC—who in Congress has done good deeds in the past year for the oral health of the American people?

The first name mentioned was that of Steny Hoyer, Democratic House of Representatives member from the state of Maryland. And lo and behold, he is here today! Welcome Congressman Hoyer and his legislative assistant Lisa Levine.

Congressman Hoyer has a history of being a significant ally for oral health and dentistry. He has been a friend in the largest sense.

—A member of a key Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

—A principal player in passing the Americans with Disabilities Act.

—A supporter of oral health components in community/migrant health legislation, the National Health Service Corps, MCH programs, Indian

Health Service, Centers for Disease Control, dental public health residency funding, and the Ryan White Act.

—The author of numerous bills and amendments to protect the pay, benefits, and rights of federal government employees.

—A strong supporter of medical research, a strong proponent of the National Institute of Dental Research and programs such as the Dentist Scientist Research Program.

—A primary reason for the award this year, Congressman Hoyer's authoring of HR 1288, the Medicare Necessary Dental Care Act of 1997, a bill to amend Title 18 of the Social Security Act to provide coverage under Part B for cost-effective, medically necessary dental procedures.

Congressman Hoyer has been a leader in Congress in acting on the outcomes of the Consensus Conference on Medically Necessary Oral Care—to appreciate the needs of special patients and give equal priority to the mouth as well as the rest of the body. Unfortunately, oral health treatment was left out of Medicare and millions of Americans have suffered for that decision.

John Rutkauskas, executive director of the Federation of Special Care Organizations in Dentistry, states in a recent editorial that Congressman Hoyer was identified as the key person for sponsorship of legislation and to assist with the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) in recogniz-

ing significant cost savings in medical costs impacted by oral disease.

The example of significant cost savings of medically necessary dental care first presented to Congressman Hoyer and HCFA was congenital or acquired valvular heart disease. The editorial states, "We were particularly impressed that Congressman Hoyer keenly appreciated and understood the issue, with his promise that if our figures bear out and we find significant savings for other disease categories, legislation could possibly be drafted in the future."

Congressman Hoyer kept his promise. His legislation states:

Dental services shall be considered to be cost effective if furnished in conjunction with treatment of an individual with any of the following diagnoses: congenital or acquired valvular heart disease, cancer of the head and neck, lymphoma, leukemia, and organ transplantation.

Congressman Hoyer has served the 5th District of Maryland in the House of Representatives for 16 years. He won reelection in 1996 with 57 percent of the vote. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland and Georgetown University Law Center. He and his late wife, Judith Pickett Hoyer, have three daughters and two grandchildren. Congressman Hoyer, congratulations on receiving the AAPHD Public Service Award.

Remarks on Receiving the Public Service Award

Congressman Steny H. Hoyer

I am pleased to have been honored with the AAPHD Public Service Award for my work with oral health. Oral health is an important and unfortunately too often overlooked area of

health care. Proper dental care should be available to all Americans, especially Medicare and Medicaid recipients. I appreciate your award and the recognition of my work to strengthen and extend dental care for Americans

through my work on the Appropriations Committee and in the House of Representatives. I look forward to sharing this award and the work AAPHD does with my colleagues.