

# Cover Your Butt at Call on Congress

Posted At : March 19, 2010 12:55 PM | Posted By : Guest Blogger

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March is colorectal cancer awareness month. As someone who is living with stage 4 colon cancer, I'm painfully aware of the need for research, empowerment, and access. Colorectal Cancer Coalition gives us all of these and so much more.

I traveled to D.C. with [Colorectal Cancer Coalition](#) (C3) in order to share my voice and experience for a disease that is preventable, treatable, and beatable.

Advocates from across the country joined together yesterday wearing Cover Your Butt t-shirts and descended upon Capitol Hill to encourage legislators to support the following three legislative proposals that will help us win the fight against colorectal cancer:

- **The Colorectal Cancer Prevention, Early Detection, and Treatment Act of 2009 (H.R. 1189).** This important legislation would establish a national colorectal cancer screening and treatment program administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Approximately 30,000 to 44,000 lives a year could be saved if colorectal cancer screening was fully accessible and utilized. In addition to saving thousands of lives, this legislation has the potential to save billions in Medicare expenditures. According to an independent study by The Lewin Group, the provisions in this bill will save Medicare billions of dollars.
- **The Colorectal Cancer Screening and Detection Act (H.R. 1330).** This legislation would require all health insurance plans, both individual and group, to cover a colonoscopy for anyone age 50 or older. The coverage this important legislation requires is similar to the coverage that almost all states require health plans to provide for breast cancer screening. Enactment of this bill will help to increase population-based screening rates for colorectal cancer (currently less than half of those who should be screened do get screened).
- **\$50 million in funding for the Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program (PRCRP) at the Department of Defense for Fiscal Year 2011.** This program at the Department of Defense funds research for a number of cancers including colorectal cancer. The program supports high-quality cancer research, concentrating its resources on research mechanisms which complement rather than duplicate the research approaches of the major funders of medical research in the United States. Last year alone approximately 422,600 Americans were diagnosed with one of the cancers included in the PRCRP and 127,730 Americans lost their lives to one of these diseases.

I had positive meetings with both Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and Senator John Cornyn's offices (both of Texas) and then was surprised by an amazing photo opportunity with Texas Representative Kay Granger, who is champion and sponsor of our cause. Judi Weiler Sohn (C3 vice president of operations), Sue Weiler, Carlea Bauman (C3 president), and Catherine Knowles (C3 director of policy) were also there. It was an emotional visit, filled with both tears and gratitude.

Representative Granger graciously gave each of us an official copy of the Congressional Record and then shared that she had lost her dad to colorectal cancer, making an already meaningful meeting even more poignant. There is nothing as momentous as a shared journey, especially when paths collide and lives are saved.

I visited Representative Jeb Hensarling's office next and was unable to meet with him because of a House vote. However, I spoke candidly to his legislative assistant and hope the importance of this legislation becomes a priority. I told him that his support is now on my bucket list! There is not only fiscal integrity involved but constituent lives at stake. I promised that there would be a deluge of phone calls on March 30 with one simple message--"Cover Your Butt!"--and the necessity of this issue would be well conveyed.

I owe a lot to Shelly Weiler's guidance, as I would not be alive without him. And without the efforts and encouragement of C3, I would not have had the courage to enter the halls of Congress. I paid tribute to that support when I recently testified before the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee. It was a testament to the value that research has provided in this past decade and will continue to exude in the future.

As Pam Seijo says, "Getting together each year motivates us to do more. This year's attendees were more determined and driven than ever!"

"Rejuvenation!" says Gordon Cole. "The first time attendees project an energy and then those of us who have attended before re-ignites the spark to do it again and again."

Each year advocates are assigned to mentor groups. This year Liz Itter was my mentor. She is an incredible survivor. I'm so happy to have gotten to spend some time with her. (She even convinced me to try the metro this year). Check out her website at [www.runlizrun.com](http://www.runlizrun.com). What an incredible survivor!

Please help us ensure legislative support on March 30 by being a part of our Congressional Butt-In. It's easy! Call 866-615-3375, and when you reach your officials say, "I urge my Senator/Representative to support the colorectal cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment act."

*Suzanne Lindley is a colorectal cancer survivor and advocate from Canton, Texas.*



Pictured: Sue Weiler, Suzanne Lindley, Representative Kay Granger, and Judi Sohn.