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Campaign to End Obesity Honors Five Members of Congress in “Breakfast with Champions”

WASHINGTON, DC –Today, the Campaign to End Obesity recognized five outstanding Members of Congress whose work has been instrumental in moving forward provisions to end the obesity epidemic. In its third annual “Breakfast with Champions,” leaders from academia, business and the health care field convened to acknowledge these key players in health care policy, education policy and food and nutrition policy, among other areas. The event also served to encourage these visionaries’ colleagues to take up needed reforms that will reverse one of America’s costliest medical challenges.

“If we are going to reduce the one of the greatest single costs to our health care system, Americans need exactly the kind of leadership these Members of Congress represent,” said Penny Lee, Executive Director of the Campaign to End Obesity. “These champions’ work is a strong call to action for Congress to take up changes that enable our health care community to help prevent obesity, give federal programs resources to promote good nutrition and physical activity, and provide our communities the tools they need to make the healthy choice, the easy choice.”

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) was recognized for his legacy of helping others. From paving the way for the Americans with Disabilities Act to supporting medical research, he is a tireless advocate for a healthier America. Senator Harkin is the co-chair of the Senate Rural Health Caucus and has made treating obesity in rural communities a top priority. Recently, he introduced the Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act with Sen. Klobuchar (D-MN), and has worked with Sen. Gillibrand (D-NY) on a bill to expand USDA authority to regulate all foods served in schools. In 2008, Sen. Harkin sponsored the Federal Obesity Prevention Act with Sens. Dodd (D-CT) and Bingaman (D-NM), to establish a federal interagency taskforce to combat obesity across America.

Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) was also recognized for her efforts. Serving as chair of the Children’s Health Subcommittee under the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works, Sen. Klobuchar recently held a productive hearing to examine the environmental causes of obesity. And in April 2009, she sponsored the Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act with Sen. Harkin (D-IA). The bill seeks to improve the nutrition and health of schoolchildren and protect the Federal investment in the national school lunch and breakfast programs by updating the national school nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold outside of school meals to conform to current nutrition science.

As a member and former chairman of the Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee, **Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN)** has devoted his energies not only to federal school meal programs, but also to bolstering participation in after-school care, expanding the provision of food during summer months and vacation times, and facilitating the availability of meals in early childhood settings, including both center-based and home-based child care. Senator Lugar is widely considered to be a thought leader on issues relating to hunger and obesity and a voice for rural America.

Congressman Ron Kind (D-WI-3) has been enormously active in addressing obesity issues throughout his career, including through the Fitness Integrated with Teaching Kids Act (FIT Kids Act), which seeks to improve physical and nutritional education for children, and which passed the House Floor in April. In addition, he has introduced the Healthy CHOICES Act to improve childhood nutrition, increase opportunities for physical activity, expand access to nutritional information and healthy foods, increase research and assessment tools nationally and provide needed change to our health care infrastructure.

Finally, **Congresswoman Marcia Fudge's (D-OH-11)** work in the House of Representatives has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to reducing childhood obesity, increasing physical activity among youth, promoting healthy eating habits and encouraging youth to complete routine preventive medical screenings. In September, she spearheaded a resolution to designate September as National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, and currently, Rep. Fudge preparing comprehensive legislation aimed at addressing childhood obesity in rural, low-income, Native America and minority communities that are particularly hard hit by this epidemic.

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About the Campaign

The Campaign to End Obesity is dedicated to reversing America's costliest disease. Ending this epidemic requires change – in individuals, institutions and communities. The Campaign convenes leaders from industry, academia, public health and associations to speak with one voice for federal policies to reverse the obesity epidemic and promote healthy weight in children and adults.