

3/20/51
Press Release - Rep. John E. Fogarty's Statement on Survey of Sickness Bill.

Information on the extent of chronic and disabling diseases in the United States today is so inadequate that the Congress has to rely upon data 15 years old and of doubtful accuracy in making appropriations for research in these diseases, Rep. John E. Fogarty (D., R.I.) declared today.

Fogarty, author of a bill which would authorize a new survey by the U.S. Public Health Service, pointed out that the 1935 National Health Survey, a WPA project, was restricted to the cities and did not cover a broad enough segment of the population.

"The battle against chronic diseases, which has been advanced by sizeable Congressional appropriations in recent years to the National Institutes of Health, is handicapped at the present time by lack of precise data on the extent of these crippling illnesses," Fogarty said. "Federal, state and local governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations have been similarly handicapped in their attempts to properly plan facilities, rehabilitation programs and research projects applicable to particular diseases."

Fogarty said recent military and mobilization manpower demands pointed up the need for a more accurate picture of the extent to which chronic illnesses handicapped our defense effort.

"In terms of production today, more than one and one-half billion man-days are lost annually because of sickness and disability," Fogarty said. "Nearly 3,000,000 workers annually are prevented from working by total disability. The financial loss to the nation is staggering - \$27,000,000,000 a year. In appropriating monies for research to cut down this enormous toll, the Congress should have, for guidance, a factual, up-to-date survey of the incidence of each particular disease."

The Rhode Island congressman said considerable advances made in the science of sampling since 1935, plus other improvements to give more diagnostic medical accuracy,

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would result in a more accurate and less costly survey.

"I am certain the doctors of the country will cooperate fully in this vital survey," Fogarty said. "They have supported wholeheartedly the work of the Commission on Chronic Illness, established in 1949 to spearhead a joint attack on the serious national problems raised by chronic illness. The American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association, the American Public Health Association, the American Public Welfare Association, the insurance companies, labor unions, the Grange, industry, as well as state and city health and welfare departments are all represented on this commission. We can count on the assistance of the Commission on Chronic Illness in connection with the planning and operation of the survey program."

Fogarty said he envisioned, as a result of the proposed legislation, provision for periodic estimates of the amount of chronic disease and handicapping conditions in the population.

"These periodic estimates will be needed by all types of public and private health agencies and organizations in the planning of programs," he said. "Many cities and rural counties which cannot afford to conduct a canvass of this sort will benefit tremendously from a periodic inventory which includes accurate, up-to-date data."