



**The Amyotrophic  
Lateral Sclerosis Association**

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# News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Washington, DC - The ALS Association (ALSA) today urged the Congressional leadership to eliminate a regulatory barrier that impedes innovative medical research – research that could help the nation make progress in finding a treatment and cure for Lou Gehrig’s disease.

In a letter to House Speaker Dennis Hastert, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist and Minority Leader Harry Reid, ALSA and a coalition of more than 30 patient advocacy and biotechnology organizations urged Congressional leaders to pass the ***Save America’s Biotechnology Innovative Research (SABIR) Act*** (H.R. 2943/S. 1263) before Congress adjourns for the year.

The bill, sponsored by Congressman Sam Graves and Senator Kit Bond, would permit Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants to be awarded to biotechnology and medical device companies that are supported by venture capital. Because of a recent change in how the Small Business Administration interprets eligibility rules for the grant program, many innovative start-up biotech and medical device companies are no longer eligible for these vital grants, which provide critical early stage funding for research and development.

*“Our nation’s biotech companies play a critical role in the search for a treatment and cure for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig’s disease,”* said Steve Gibson, ALSA’s Vice President of Government Relations. *“Through partnerships with organizations like ALSA, research conducted by the biotech community can help us solve the mysteries of ALS; what causes the disease and how it can be prevented and cured. We need to promote this research, not restrict it.”*

The SABIR Act is particularly important to the ALS community because ALS is an orphan disease and because there currently is only one drug approved by the FDA to treat the disease, prolonging life by just a few months. By providing support to biotech and medical device companies, SBIR grants will help foster innovation that may lead to breakthroughs in the treatment of ALS - breakthroughs that will improve and save lives and help make ALS a disease of the past.

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Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive, fatal neurodegenerative disease that attacks nerve cells and pathways in the brain and spinal cord, ultimately resulting in a loss of voluntary muscle control, paralysis and death. The average life expectancy for people with ALS is two to five years from the time of diagnosis. There is no known cause of ALS, nor is there a cure or means of prevention.

*The ALS Association is the only national voluntary health association dedicated solely to the fight against ALS, seeking to discover a treatment and cure for the disease through research, patient services, public education and advocacy. The Association is the largest private source of funding for ALS-specific scientific research in the world.*