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**Hepatitis Awareness Month Begins May 1st
National Leaders Urge All Asian and Pacific Islander Americans
To Be Tested For Hepatitis B
& Stronger Action From Congress and Administration**

The National Task Force of Hepatitis B with Focus on Asian and Pacific Islander Americans and the Asian Health Foundation kicked off Hepatitis Awareness Month today by urging the nation's leaders to take bold action in ending the hepatitis B epidemic and urging all Asian Americans and others at risk to be tested for the virus. An estimated 800,000-1.2 million Americans are chronically infected with hepatitis B, a vaccine-preventable disease that affects the liver. The overwhelming majority do not know they are infected, leaving them at risk for advanced liver disease and liver cancer. Asian Americans are particularly affected by hepatitis B. While Asian Americans comprise 4% of the overall population in the United States, they make up over half the number of Americans who have chronic hepatitis B, resulting in one of the greatest racial health disparities in the country.

“One in twelve Asian Americans is chronically infected with hepatitis B,” said Dr. Loc Le, Chair of the Task Force. “This is a serious health disparity that must be addressed. We urge all Asian Americans to be screened for hepatitis B, linked to care if testing positive, and vaccinated if testing negative.”

The Task Force and the Asian Health Foundation also called on Congress and the Obama Administration to demonstrate strong leadership in the fight against hepatitis B. While much has been accomplished in recent years, including the release of the first U.S. Health and Human Services Department viral hepatitis action plan, the establishment of a Congressional Viral Hepatitis Caucus, and small increases in federal funding for hepatitis prevention services, much more remains to be done to end the epidemic.

“Our nation’s leaders must step up and take a leadership role in addressing the hepatitis B epidemic,” said Jocelyn Woog, Executive Director of the Asian Health Foundation. “As we enter Hepatitis Awareness Month, we call on Congress and President Obama to increase funding for viral hepatitis services and to use their position as public officials to educate those at risk about the disease and encourage them to be tested.”

The National Hepatitis B Task Force and the Asian Health Foundation urges everyone to take an online hepatitis risk assessment created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/riskassessment/>. For more information about hepatitis B, please visit www.hepbtaskforce.org and www.theasianhealthfoundation.org.