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June 7, 2008

Dear Congressman Knollenberg,

I hope this letter finds you well. As one of your constituents, I have a couple policy concerns I would like to express:

- **A more consumer-efficient process for those people seeking Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits from the U.S. Government**

- **Research, recognition, and legitimization of the illness know as Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS) and/or Environmental Illness (EI)**

I am a former young professional and University of Chicago public policy studies graduate student, who was chemically injured while studying abroad. I now have severe chemical sensitivities and health problems, and I am unable to work. This is problematic for me on many levels, but my suffering is exacerbated by the fact that my illness is not recognized by the general medical community (even though many people are suffering from it), and because my mother is going into severe debt supporting me while I await the multi-year process to receive Social Security Disability Insurance benefits.

I encourage you to do whatever you can to help get research funding and recognition for people who are afflicted by chemical injuries and the severe health problems such injuries cause. There is an emerging body of medical evidence supporting the fact that Multiple Chemical Sensitivities and Environmental Illness are indeed very real health conditions. Gulf War Syndrome and the health problems that many 9/11 survivors are experiencing are of this nature. I would be happy to provide you with excellent resources to help guide you in your acquisition of knowledge about this health problem, if need be.

I also believe it is necessary that the United States Social Security Administration establish a more consumer-efficient process for people seeking disability benefits. Currently, it takes about three years for people who are sick and disabled to receive Social Security Disability Insurance benefits. This is outrageous. Many people die, put their families into debt, or end up homeless while waiting to receive approval of their benefits. I think this is a disgrace and we can do better for the disabled people of this country.

Thank you for hearing my voice. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Regards,

Jaime A. Owen

Jaime Owen

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