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**Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN USA) Urges Passage
of Melanie Blocker Stokes Postpartum Depression Measure**

House Considers Legislation Today; SPAN USA Urges Senate to Also Pass Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C., October 15, 2007 The Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN USA) today joined bill sponsor U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush (D-Ill.) and other non-profit organizations to celebrate the expected passage of the Melanie Blocker Stokes Postpartum Depression Research and Care Act (H.R. 20) to support research, education and awareness of postpartum depression.

SPAN USA Executive Director Jerry Reed said the bill provides immediate attention and resources towards one of the most commonly undiagnosed conditions after childbirth – postpartum depression.

“This bill prioritizes postpartum depression by expanding research and establishing grants for the operation and coordination of essential services to those who are affected and their families,” Reed said. “And it tackles the problem both in the medical trenches where providers are in a position to immediately diagnose and treat postpartum disorders as well as in the research laboratories where scientists are working to understand the illness.”

Rep. Rush said many families have waited far too long for Congressional action on the issue.

“By passing this legislation, our nation will take an enormous step forward in education, research, screening and treatment of postpartum depression, postpartum psychosis, and pregnancy related depression,” Rep. Rush said.

The bill is named for Melanie Blocker Stokes of Chicago who died by suicide in 2001 after a long battle with postpartum depression. Specifically, the measure would direct the National Institutes of Health to expand research into postpartum depression and authorize \$3 million in grants to do so.

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SPAN USA is the nation's only suicide prevention organization dedicated to leveraging grassroots support among suicide survivors and others to advance public policies that prevent suicide. Since its founding nine years ago, SPAN USA has led the drive to make suicide a public health priority by building political will and calling for the development and implementation of a national strategy for suicide prevention. Using its extensive grassroots network of survivors and advocates, SPAN USA has actively promoted the cause on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures. For more information, please visit www.spanusa.org.

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