



PRESS RELEASE
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***United Way Honors Congressman Mike Bilirakis (R-FL)
as 'Federal Partner of the Year'***

Alexandria, VA – More than 100 people from the Tampa Bay, Florida area gathered Monday to honor Congressman Mike Bilirakis (R-FL) at an event where United Way of America presented Rep. Bilirakis with its 'Federal Partner of the Year' award. Congressman Bilirakis was nominated for this award by Susan Arnett, President and CEO, United Way of Pasco County (Florida) for his support of the "Calling for 2-1-1" bill (HR 896) currently pending in Congress.

United Way of America's public policy priorities are issues that help the United Way movement advance a mission of community impact at the federal level. These federal legislative issues include: nationwide access to 2-1-1; early childhood development; non-profit accountability; charitable giving incentives; and federal budget policy. United Way's public policy agenda is one that seeks to both give voice to those critical issues before Congress and the Administration and enhance the ability of local United Ways to further their community work.

"As United Way of America has increased our advocacy efforts at the national level on those issues most critical to our community impact work, we recognize and honor a Member of Congress who has exhibited leadership and commitment to our top public policy priorities," stated Paul Thornell, Senior Vice President, Public Policy and Field Leadership, United Way of America. "Because of his leadership on United Way's top legislative priority, The Calling for 2-1-1 Act and his longstanding commitment to health and human services, United Way of America is pleased to present our 2005-2006 Federal Partner of the Year Award to Congressman Mike Bilirakis," Thornell continued.

Congressman Bilirakis has been the lead House sponsor of the Calling for 2-1-1 Act (H.R. 896), legislation that would help create nationwide access to 2-1-1, the number to call to get information on community services and volunteer opportunities. As Vice Chair of the House Energy and

Commerce Committee to which the bill was referred, the Congressman has been a strong champion leading the effort in the House of Representatives to get the legislation passed this Congress.

Recognizing the importance of full access to 2-1-1 for his district and the state of Florida following the 2004 hurricanes, Rep. Bilirakis introduced the bill at the beginning of 2005 and has been a key partner in helping to build strong bipartisan support for it. To date, 150 House members are cosponsors of the bill, including a majority of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and several members of the House Republican and Democratic Leadership.

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember three-digit dialing system (similar to 9-1-1 and 4-1-1) that makes a simple but critical connection between individuals and families seeking services or volunteer opportunities and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. It is a cost-effective answer to help those in need navigate the complex and ever-growing maze of human service agencies and programs. 2-1-1 was created and launched by United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta in 1997 and in only six years since the FCC designation has grown to serve over 172 million Americans - over 57% of the US population covering all or part of 39 states plus Washington, DC and Puerto Rico. For more information about 2-1-1 visit www.211.org.

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About United Way of America

United Way is a national network of more than 1,300 locally governed organizations that work to create lasting positive changes in communities and people's lives. Building on more than a century of service as the nation's preeminent community-based fundraiser, United Way engages the community to identify the underlying causes of the most significant local issues, develops strategies and pulls together financial and human resources to address them, and measures the results. United Way of America is the national organization dedicated to leading the United Way movement. While local United Ways tackle issues based on local needs, common focus areas include helping children and youth succeed, improving access to health care, promoting self-sufficiency, and strengthening families. For more information about United Way of America, please visit: www.unitedway.org.