



# Campaign to Ensure Prosthetic Coverage

Today, nearly 1.7 million Americans live with the absence or loss of a limb and estimates indicate that this number is likely to grow as a direct result of diabetes and vascular diseases and the overall aging of our population. It is estimated that over 185,000 amputations are performed each year. We therefore anticipate a drastic increase in the number of amputees in this country in the years to come.

In response to overwhelming calls for information and for help from a growing number of people experiencing difficulty in obtaining appropriate prosthetic care, ACA has expanded its advocacy efforts and launched a new program to help ensure that no person with limb loss is denied the care they need to continue to live long and productive lives.

**Although people with limb loss face a number of obvious challenges, trying to obtain appropriate prosthetic care is among the most discouraging and least known.** Most of us are unaware that, according to the accepted Medicare standard, a lower-limb prosthesis has a likely life expectancy of only three to five years, that private third-party payers will pay the surgical cost of amputating a limb and for subsequent amputations caused by inactivity, while simultaneously limiting or even eliminating prosthetic coverage, and that they place annual or lifetime limits or "caps" on prosthetic devices and services, some providing coverage for only one such device per lifetime, regardless of the person's age.

**This has placed needed and appropriate prosthetic care entirely out of the reach of many people all across the nation.**

This is especially troubling, given the improvements and innovations currently available in prosthetics. The successful rehabilitation of military personnel who have experienced limb loss while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan graphically illustrates this fact. But the superior care and access to state-of-the-art prosthetic services that they enjoy is increasingly unavailable to the general population.

Financial considerations are the primary obstacles that prevent many people with limb loss from obtaining the proper prosthetic devices that would make it possible for them to continue to lead productive lives.

It is well known that lack of access to these devices leads to poor rehabilitation outcomes, and places amputees at a greater risk of developing dangerous and costly secondary conditions such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and additional amputation. These in turn lead to decreases in mobility, productivity and the ability to live independently. These factors combine to create additional costs of care, significantly impact the quality of life and shorten life expectancy.

**Given these facts, ACA firmly believes that the current situation constitutes a national health threat and an intolerable injustice whose full impact on the lives of all those affected will not be permitted to continue once it is fully understood.**

In a recent ACA survey, our constituents identified insurance coverage for prosthetics as their number one concern. We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of companies that are reducing or eliminating coverage for prosthetics. In fact, a December 2005-January 2006 poll of 660 users of ACA's Web site found that of the 423 (64 percent) of respondents who had private insurance, 31 percent had experienced a reduction or rejection in coverage.

In 2001, Colorado was the first state to successfully pass prosthetic parity laws mandating that third-party payer coverage is consistent with Medicare standards. This was followed by Maine in 2003 and New Hampshire in 2004. With the help of the ACA, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and California all passed bills in 2006. The Oregon bill was signed into law in the summer of 2007.

Although we applaud these examples, it is imperative that all states be informed of the enormous human cost associated with an inability to obtain proper prostheses, and the relatively small cost of ensuring that all people with limb loss have access to proper prosthetic care. To inform and to motivate the entire nation about this glaring injustice, the ACA has been working with states throughout the country to support prosthetic parity legislation at the state level. At this time, there are twenty-eight states with a bill in play.

At this time, the ACA also feels that it is time to move forward with a Congressional effort. The ACA will officially launch a federal campaign for prosthetic coverage in 2008.

*For more information about the ACA's state parity efforts, contact us at [state@amputee-coalition.org](mailto:state@amputee-coalition.org) or 202/742-1885. To get involved in the federal initiative, contact us at [federal@amputee-coalition.org](mailto:federal@amputee-coalition.org).*