



STANDING TOGETHER **DANIEL E. SMITH**

In 2008, over 1.4 million Americans will hear three of the perhaps most dreaded words in the English language, "You have cancer." The good news is that thanks to better prevention, early detection and treatment, cancer is no longer an automatic death sentence - in fact, more than 10 million Americans who are alive today have survived cancer. These individuals and their loved ones had no choice but to stand up to cancer. And all of us in the cancer advocacy community must stand with them. We must stand up to cancer, and we must stand together. The time has come for a united cancer movement.

A unified movement will put cancer where it belongs - at the top of the nation's agenda. But just what does a cancer movement look like? My experiences as president of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) and as chair of One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC) have suggested some answers to this question.

Standing up to cancer means empowering citizens to take action to make cancer a national priority.

We must provide a nationwide network of cancer patients, survivors, caregivers and their families with the training and tools they need to make their voices truly heard in the halls of government.

ACS CAN and OVAC are standing up to cancer, along with many others. Drawing from a collective sense of determination, ordinary people are finding that they have extraordinary power to fight cancer. Having a unified cancer movement will grow this power exponentially. It will truly be something extraordinary.

Standing up to cancer means having the muscle to make the voice of the cancer advocacy community heard.

Countless groups try to influence laws and policies, but only those with political muscle are able to make a difference. The cancer movement must therefore be organized and united in its mission to defeat cancer.

In the past, each cancer group has approached Congress separately, often with

different or conflicting funding requests, different priorities and different strategies. These days cancer groups share a common purpose in their fight for increased funding for priority cancer programs.

The cancer movement must likewise share a common purpose. In addition to continuing the push for the critical funding that allows us to make new discoveries, we must also fight to implement programs that capitalize on the life-saving benefits of prevention and early detection.

Standing up to cancer means holding the government accountable for its critical role in defeating cancer.

If we in the cancer advocacy community are going to win the fight against cancer, we must fund the fight against cancer. We need government officials to do everything in their power (which is a lot) to support our efforts. The federal government is by far the largest source of cancer research funding, and yet for the last five years funding for cancer has been frozen or cut. This is unacceptable when 560,000 Americans are losing their lives to cancer every year.

But we are not just asking for money to search for answers; we are also looking to realize the benefits of the answers we have already found. Consider the following:

- 30% of all cancer deaths are caused by tobacco. Smoke-free laws, higher tobacco taxes, and well-funded tobacco control programs are proven ways to reduce tobacco-related illness. However, our country does not do enough to fully attain the benefits of these sensible solutions. Meanwhile, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration lacks any regulatory authority over Big Tobacco and its deadly products, including its ability to market to kids.
- State and federal programs offer screenings and treatment to low-income and uninsured women for breast and cervical cancer. However, these programs are insufficiently funded. As a result, most eligible women do not benefit. For example, there is currently only enough funding to screen 1 in 5 eligible women for the community-based breast and cervical cancer screening program run by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Forty-seven million people in America are uninsured and millions more are underinsured. This makes them more likely to be diagnosed at later stages, when cancers are more deadly.

The cancer movement offers the return on investment that government officials seek. We have provided results before. Given the necessary commitment to our movement, our shared accomplishments will be even greater moving forward.

Standing up to cancer means making cancer history.

We know what it takes to defeat cancer. The time has come to make it happen.

Two-thirds of all cancer deaths are preventable. Breast, cervical, and colon cancer screenings save lives by detecting cancer early, when it is easier to treat and less costly. In some cases cancer can be prevented through regular screenings. Meanwhile, scientific breakthroughs are leading to better screening tests, treatments, and cancer-preventing vaccines. A remarkable future lies ahead provided that we are ready to work together and embrace the possibilities within our reach.

It is time to stand up to cancer. But neither ACS CAN nor OVAC nor any other organization should stand alone. And the cancer advocacy community cannot stand still. Join the cancer movement.

Get involved and get active because one person, united with thousands of others just like them, can truly make a difference.

If we all stand up and tell our lawmakers it's time for them to stand up as well, we will defeat this disease.

Daniel E. Smith is the [President](#) of the [American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network SM \(ACS CAN\)](#). He also founded and leads [One Voice Against Cancer \(OVAC\)](#), a coalition of more than 40 cancer-related organizations that has successfully advocated for billions of dollars in funding for cancer research and programs. Smith currently resides in Maryland with his wife, Lorraine Voles, and their two children, Ruby and Angus. For more information on ACS CAN and OVAC, please visit <http://acscan.org/> and <http://www.ovaonline.org/>

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