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News

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For Immediate Release

Rep. Diana DeGette Recognized for Unflinching Support of Health Care Priorities *STS Legislator of the Year Award honors visionary leadership and outstanding achievement*

WASHINGTON, DC (October 6, 2020) — Congresswoman Diana DeGette (D-CO) was named Legislator of the Year by The Society of Thoracic Surgeons on Monday in recognition of her strong leadership and fierce advocacy for health care policies that impact cardiothoracic surgeons and their patients.

“It’s an honor to receive The Society of Thoracic Surgeons Legislator of the Year award,” said Rep. DeGette. “We’re facing one of the worst public health crises in our nation’s history, and it’s made the work that our cardiothoracic surgeons and all of our front line health care workers do that much more important. So, thank you to them and everyone at STS for your tireless efforts to help us improve our nation’s health care system and modernize the way we care for patients.”

Elected to the US House of Representatives in 1997 and in her 12th congressional term, Rep. DeGette is recognized as a leading voice in health care policy. She helped author the 21st Century Cures Act, which was signed into law in 2016. Hailed as one of the most important pieces of legislation that Congress has passed in recent years, the Cures Act has bettered the prevention and screening of cancer, improved the field of stem cell science, helped lower health care costs for Americans, and brought scientists closer to discovering cures for serious medical conditions such as sickle cell disease.

Most recently, Rep. DeGette spearheaded a concept paper for the bipartisan “Cures 2.0”—a second iteration of the original Cures Act. While the new bill is still being developed, some of its high-level areas of focus include COVID-19 surveillance and testing, innovation and quality in health care, educational programs for at-home caregivers, patient health literacy, diversity in clinical trials, and access to treatment.

In addition, Rep. DeGette consistently has been a champion of STS advocacy priorities such as the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute and e-cigarette and vaping regulations. She also supported the repeal of the Sustainable Growth Rate and voted in favor of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015.

“Representative DeGette has a deep understanding of health care issues and possesses a strong legislative record,” said Alan M. Speir, MD, chair of the STS Council on Health Policy and Relationships. “She has been a tremendous advocate for the cardiothoracic surgery specialty and has authored landmark legislation that is vitally important to the health and wellbeing of Americans. Representative DeGette has distinguished herself from others through her commitment, dedication, and hard work. It is our pleasure to present her with this much-deserved award.”

Rep. DeGette currently chairs the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee for the House Committee on Energy & Commerce. In this role, she is responsible for overseeing several US federal agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Food and Drug Administration. Rep. DeGette also serves as a member of the House Committee on Natural Resources and several other subcommittees.

“Representative Diana DeGette is a special person who has consistently supported STS and all of medicine over the past several decades, and many would agree that she is one of just a few members of Congress who are most knowledgeable on medical issues and health policy in the US today,” said STS Past President Frederick L. Grover Sr., MD. “After knowing Representative DeGette for more than 20 years, I can say that her ethics and honesty are at the highest level. Amazingly, when she is in Denver on a weekend, she even finds time to sing in our church choir. Representative DeGette is very deserving of this award and the perfect choice.”

The STS Legislator of the Year Award acknowledges a member of Congress who has made sustained and/or extraordinary efforts in promoting issues of importance to cardiothoracic surgeons and their patients through legislation, funding, or other outreach to policymakers.

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Founded in 1964, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 7,300 cardiothoracic surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for surgeries of the heart, lung, and esophagus, as well as other surgical procedures within the chest. The Society’s mission is to advance cardiothoracic surgeons’ delivery of the highest quality patient care through collaboration, education, research, and advocacy.