

## This Day in History... August 5, 1937

### Founding of National Cancer Institute

On August 5, 1937, President Franklin Roosevelt signed legislation creating the National Cancer Institute. The institute researches cures and treatments for cancer and is the oldest and largest institute of the National Institutes of Health.

Congress established the National Board of Health in 1879 to stop the "introduction of contagious or infectious diseases into the United States." Though only in operation until 1883, this was one of the first instances of the US government officially investing in medical research.

In 1887, New York's Marine Hospital opened the Hygienic Laboratory to study bacteria. In the 1920s the organization became Public Health Services and opened a Special Cancer Investigations lab at Harvard Medical School. The organization was renamed again in 1930, becoming the National Institute of Health (NIH). It was also granted \$750,000 for the construction of two buildings.

Legislation focused specifically on cancer appeared in the 1920s. In 1927, West Virginia Senator M.M. Neely introduced a bill offering a \$5 million reward for the discovery of a cure for cancer and called for the creation of a commission to research if such a cure was possible. The following year Senator Neely brought forth another bill authorizing the National Academy of Sciences to investigate the use of federal aid to find a cure for cancer. In 1929, Senator W.J. Harris of Georgia submitted two bills with similar aims to Neely's, promoting the research and funding of a cancer cure. In April 1937, Texas Congressman Maury Maverick submitted a resolution to create a National Cancer Center with \$2.4 million in initial funding and \$1 million annually after that.

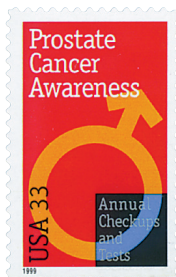
Finally, on August 5, 1937, President Roosevelt signed the National Cancer Institute Act. The act established the National Cancer Institute (NCI) as the government's agency to research, train, diagnose, and treat cancer with an initial funding of \$700,000. In 1944, it became part of the National Institutes of Health and in 1957, the NCI cured its first cancer, choriocarcinoma with chemotherapy.

By 1970, cancer was the second leading cause of death in the United States. In his 1971 State of the Union address, President Richard Nixon promised to devote more funds to cancer research. He stated that it was time to apply to cancer eradication the same efforts that had created the A-bomb and put man on the Moon. The "War on Cancer" officially began in 1971 when Nixon signed the National Cancer Act into law. He is quoted as saying, "I hope in the years ahead we will look back on this action today as the most significant action taken during my Administration."

The act intended to help the NCI in its efforts to fight the disease. Many cancers once fatal have since become treatable and sometimes even curable. Today, the NCI is the oldest and largest program of the NIH, receiving more than \$5 billion in funding every year. There are currently 71 NCI-designated Cancer Centers around the country that research cancer and its treatments.



*This stamp honors Dr. Papanicolaou, who developed the "pap test" used to detect uterine cancer.*



*After lung cancer, prostate cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in men. The USPS hoped this stamp would encourage men to discuss the disease with their doctors.*



*This stamp was issued to honor the cancer research being done by both the government and private groups.*



*Stamp issued as part of a public service campaign in conjunction with the '96 National Race for the Cure.*



*America's first Semipostal stamp, which raised funds for breast cancer research.*

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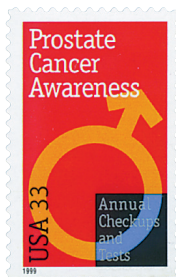
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