

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 4 March 2008**

## **Consumer organizations launch campaign demanding right to referendums**

**Six non-governmental organizations (NGOs), collectively representing consumers from all 27 European Union (EU) countries, today announced the official launch of a campaign for citizens to have the right to vote in referendums whenever significant changes to laws affecting them are made at either national or European level. In particular, they are demanding that all EU citizens should immediately be given the opportunity to vote in referendums on the Lisbon Treaty.**

**Arguing that the EU is increasingly favouring the interests of big business over those of its own citizens, the six organizations say that unless this situation is reversed and European citizens are given the right to be directly involved in political decision-making, the European political system will rapidly degenerate into a dictatorship where democracy, freedom of choice and the privacy rights of individuals are routinely violated.**

Paul Anthony Taylor, External Relations Director of the Dr. Rath Health Foundation and the campaign's coordinator, said: *"Last November, for the thirteenth year in a row, the EU's auditors refused to sign off its financial accounts citing errors of legality and presumed attempts at fraud. Then, only two weeks ago, EU politicians were openly accused of fraud and embezzlement on a massive scale and an official investigation was launched that could potentially lead to the imprisonment of a number of MEPs. Corruption, fraud and an overall lack of accountability are becoming increasingly rife amongst the European Union's political elite and it is clearly time that ordinary citizens are given a direct say in the way that the EU is developing. Simply giving people one vote every four or five years - to elect their political representatives - is not nearly enough in any political system that still professes to be a democracy."*

Dr. Robert Verkerk, Executive Director of the Alliance for Natural Health, added: *"Democracy and social justice are widely regarded as prerequisites to any civilised society. Yet, the nearly 500 million citizens of Europe are increasingly at the mercy of unelected European Commission officials, who have themselves been subject to several corruption charges, as well as to the power of big corporate lobbyists. The European Parliament stands as the one token to democracy but its legislative powers are weak and it has, not surprisingly, been characterised by some as a powerless talking shop. The Lisbon Treaty is the EU's next attempt at constitutional reforms following the outright rejection of the constitution during referenda in Holland and France in 2005. To exclude any European citizen from a right to vote this time around would be to deny European citizens one of our most fundamental rights."*

Sepp Hasslberger, speaking for La Leva di Archimede, emphasised the non-democratic nature of European legislative procedures. *"It can be said without a doubt that the overhaul of health legislation undertaken by the European Commission and Parliament in recent years has disregarded the preference of citizens for the use of nutrients and herbs for purposes of prevention and healing. Recent directives revising the laws of medicines and introducing new rules for food supplements and herbs turned out to be strongly in favor of pharmaceutical control. As a result, many natural remedies and nutritional supplements available today may risk becoming illegal. Consumers would face additional dangers if those products were to be pushed into a black market economy. Certainly a European-level referendum or similar consultation of public sentiment would tend to balance the power of lobbies with the wishes and ideas of the people."*

Lutz Kliche, President of the Alliance for Health, Peace and Social Justice, commented: *"The*

*European Commission, the European Food Safety Authority and other European institutions remain strongly in favour of genetically modified foods, despite the fact that a large majority of the European population has already rejected them. Giving citizens the right to vote in referendums whenever significant changes are made to laws affecting them would therefore help to ensure the creation of a Europe for the people, by the people, and put in place an important check on the balance of power. When political policy decisions are persistently made against the will of the people, as is now the case in Brussels, what you have is not democracy but a dictatorship.”*

Scott Tips, President of the National Health Federation, added: *“The European Commission already increasingly resembles the old Soviet Politburo in both its structure and its proceedings. Ensuring that citizens of the EU have the right to vote in referendums would therefore help to ensure that the Commission does not become the new Politburo for Europe.”*

Louise McLean, Editor of Zeus Information Service, said: *“The European Union is imposing a one-size-fits-all set of regulations on its 27 member states which will be prohibitive for natural health therapies as well as the organic food supplement/vitamin industry. The EU is not so much about free trade as it is about absolute control. The British Parliament is shortly expected to ratify the Lisbon Treaty and the Queen will give the Royal Assent. In January 2009 all the 111,000 EU laws will come into effect and we will be living in a massive Police State.”*

The campaign, the European Referendum Initiative, is being backed by the Alliance for Health, Peace and Social Justice; the Alliance for Natural Health; the Dr. Rath Health Foundation; La Leva di Archimede; the National Health Federation; and Zeus Information Service.

Full details can be found at [www.eu-referendum.org](http://www.eu-referendum.org) <<http://www.eu-referendum.org>>

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## **EDITORS NOTES**

### **Alliance for Health, Peace and Social Justice**

The Alliance for Health, Peace and Social Justice (AGFG, according to its German initials) is a political party founded in 2005 by people from the natural health movement in Germany.

We believe that the issue of health – and, especially, that of ill health – cannot be fully appreciated unless one examines it in its wider, political, context. Our name comes from our belief that we cannot achieve health for all unless we are able to build a planet of peace and social justice that is based upon a healthy relationship between mankind and nature. For this reason, our current priority focuses upon defending mankind and nature against the genetic manipulation of plants and seeds. Towards this goal, we have recently initiated a campaign for a European Referendum on GMOs.

### **Alliance for Natural Health**

The Alliance for Natural Health (ANH) is a UK-based, international, non-governmental organisation, founded in 2002, that works on behalf of consumers, doctors, health practitioners and natural product suppliers worldwide, to protect and promote natural healthcare, using 'good science' and 'good law'. The ANH's objective is to help develop an appropriate legal-scientific framework and environment for the development of sustainable approaches to healthcare. Within this setting, consumers and health professionals should be able to make informed choices about a wide range of health options, and in particular those that relate to diet, lifestyle and non-drug-based or natural therapies.

### **Dr. Rath Health Foundation**

The Dr. Rath Health Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving human health on a global scale through research, education and the defence of patients' rights to choose natural health therapies. The scientific discoveries of its founder, Dr. Matthias Rath, a pioneer in natural health research, offer major breakthroughs in the natural approach to heart disease, cancer and other health concerns. His vision, backed-up by his extensive research, has unleashed the potential of controlling these diseases through natural means. As a result, the Foundation has been instrumental in promoting natural health education and people's health rights throughout the world.

### **La Leva di Archimede**

La Leva di Archimede, an association for freedom of choice and correct information, represents natural health enthusiasts, consumers, health professionals and distributors of natural health products. La Leva was founded in 1998 and has worked to protect access to nutrition-based prevention and healing in Italy. La Leva issues occasional printed updates to its Italian supporters and provides information through its popular multi-language websites. We co-ordinate our actions with similar associations both in Europe and overseas, promoting natural healing. We believe medical reform is long overdue as profit-driven pharmaceutical control of the medical paradigm and often reckless pollution of our environment has led to reduced choice, inefficiency and widespread poor health.

### **National Health Federation**

Established in 1955, the National Health Federation is an international consumer-education, health-freedom organization working to protect individuals' rights to choose to consume healthy food, take supplements, and use alternative therapies without government restrictions. With consumer members all over the world, and a Board of Governors and Advisory Board containing representatives from 6 different countries, the Federation is unique as being the only consumer health-freedom organization in the world to enjoy official observer status (able to speak out for health freedom) at meetings of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the highest international body on food standards.

### **Zeus Information Service**

Zeus Information Service came into being in February 2003. Its purpose is to help unify the Worldwide Health Freedom movement – people and organisations who believe in the value of natural health therapies and want to continue using them. Subscribers receive free *Zeus News* bulletins containing important articles from the global press and top websites – on Health Freedom, Alternative Medicine, Homeopathy, Pharma, Environment, GM Food, Vaccines and Politics. The subject of health is extremely wide ranging and Zeus presents articles on a host of key subjects affecting it.