



American Society for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery

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OBESITY IS AMERICAN ISSUE, NOT POLITICAL ONE
American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS)
Comments on News NY Congressman Tom Reed had Gastric Bypass Surgery

GAINESVILLE, FL -- May 15, 2013 -- On the heels of New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's revelation that he had weight loss surgery, a U.S. Congressman from New York announced that he too had a weight loss operation. *The Buffalo News* reported this week, "multiple indignities and a major health scare prompted Rep. Tom Reed to undergo gastric bypass surgery in February. His new lifestyle has left him 70 pounds lighter and diabetes-free."

"This week, two highly visible figures in American politics revealed they had weight loss surgery showing no American is immune from the disease of obesity," said Jaime Ponce, MD, president of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS). "We hope the attention they receive sparks a conversation on what we as individuals and as a country can do to create an environment that promotes both the prevention and treatment of obesity and related diseases."

Many health insurance companies and employers specifically exclude the treatment of obesity and severe obesity. When the Affordable Care Act goes into effect next year, it is believed that only five state health exchanges will cover weight loss programs and only 23 will cover weight loss surgery.

"Metabolic and bariatric surgery has been shown to be the most effective and long lasting treatment for morbid obesity, resulting in significant weight loss. It is also the most successful and durable treatment for many obesity-related diseases, including Type 2 diabetes," said Ninh T. Nguyen, MD, president-elect of the ASMBS and Chief of the Division of Gastrointestinal Surgery at University of California, Irvine. "Studies have demonstrated the safety of bariatric surgery with the risk of death being about 0.1 percent and the overall likelihood of major complications at about 4 percent"

Obesity is one of the greatest public health and economic threats facing the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports more than 72 million Americans have obesity and, according to the ASMBS, about 24 million have morbid obesity. Obese individuals with a BMI greater than 30 have a 50 to 100 percent increased risk of premature death compared to healthy weight individuals, as well as an increased risk of developing more than 30 obesity-related diseases and conditions including Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers.^{i,ii} The federal government estimated that in 2008, annual obesity-related health spending reached \$147 billion,ⁱⁱⁱ double what it was a decade ago. Spending on obesity related issues is projected to rise to \$344 billion each year by 2018.^{iv}

"Both Governor Christie and Congressman Reed indicated their decisions were to improve their long term health specifically for the sake of their families. It's the new American dream- to redeem your health through weight loss. But it doesn't have to be a dream, it can be a reality, if we work together at federal, state, local and individual levels to address an epidemic that hurts Americans from all walks of life," said John Morton, MD, MPH, ASMBS Secretary-Treasurer and Associate Professor of Surgery at Stanford University.

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About the ASMBS

The ASMBS is the largest organization for bariatric and metabolic surgeons and integrated health professionals in the world. It is a non-profit organization that works to advance the art and science of bariatric surgery and is committed to educating medical professionals and the lay public about bariatric surgery as an option for the treatment of morbid obesity, as well as the associated risks and benefits. It encourages its members to investigate and discover new advances in bariatric surgery, while maintaining a steady exchange of experiences and ideas that may lead to improved surgical outcomes for morbidly obese patients. For more information, visit www.asmbs.org.

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ⁱOffice of the Surgeon General – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Overweight and obesity: health consequences. Accessed March 2012 from http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/fact_consequences.html

ⁱⁱKaplan, L. M. (2003). Body weight regulation and obesity. *Journal of Gastrointestinal Surgery*. 7(4) pp. 443-51. Doi:10.1016/S1091-255X(03)00047-7. Accessed March 2012 from

<http://edulife.com.br/dados%5CArtigos%5CNutricao%5CObesidade%20e%20Sindrome%20Metabolica%5CBody%20weight%20regulation%20and%20obesity.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱFinkelstein, E. A., Trogon, J. G., Cohen, J. W., et al. (2009). Annual medical spending attributable to obesity: payer- and service-specific estimates. *Health Affairs*. 28(5) w822-w831. Accessed February 2012 from <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/causes/economics.html>

^{iv} K Thorpe. America's Health Rankings. "The Future Costs of Obesity." 2009.