

The story behind the creation of this legislation is in many ways illustrative of why we need to pass and enact the ASSURE act when Congress reconvenes next year. For it was only after I had a meeting with a pair of courageous parents of autistic children in Brick Township that I realized the pressing need for better autism research. Mr. and Mrs. William and Bobby Gallagher, the parents of two beautiful children with autism, met with me in the summer of last year to share their concerns that Brick Township seemed to have an abnormally high number of children diagnosed with autism. After presenting me with preliminary data suggesting that as many as 27 children may have been diagnosed with autism in Brick over the last decade, I relayed their concerns personally to Len Fishman, Commissioner of New Jersey's Department of Health and Senior Services. I asked him to initiate a preliminary inquiry to determine if an autism "cluster" investigation was warranted.

Commissioner Fishman was very receptive to the concerns of the Brick parents, particularly since the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) and the Ocean County Department of Health, in conjunction with the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and disease Registry (ATSDR), have been conducting a very comprehensive investigation of a cancer cluster in Toms River, New Jersey.

However, after a few weeks of preliminary research by state officials, it became apparent that the current level of scientific knowledge in the United States about autism was inadequate and no one knew for certain what the national rate of autism was. Although there were rough estimates of autism rates from studies in foreign countries, CDC and the NJDHSS did not have enough information that an epidemiologist could use to determine if the alleged autism "cluster" in Brick was a real public health problem or an illusion of chance.

As a result, an intensive effort by CDC and ATSDR is underway to try to derive national autism rates and try to determine if an autism "cluster" exists in Brick. The study is one of the first of its kind ever undertaken in the United States, and the results of the investigation will prove invaluable for other communities that may be affected by similarly high numbers of autism cases.

That is where the ASSURE act comes in. Under my ASSURE legislation, CDC will uncover and monitor the prevalence of autism as a national level by establishing between three and five "Centers for Research in Autism Epidemiology" across the country. These Centers would conduct population-based surveillance and epidemiologic studies of autism. Periodic screenings of the population (5 to 7-year old children) would be undertaken to examine prenatal, perinatal, and postnatal factors that contribute to autism development.

These Centers would combine data from multiple sites to gain a better understanding of how autism differs from other, related, developmental disabilities and disorder. Because autism is suspected to be caused by a combination of both genetic and environmental factors, the ASSURE legislation would help CDC track the trends of autism and determine which factors are responsible for the apparent rise in autism cases nationwide.

More importantly, the collaborative efforts by CDC and State health departments will help

public health officials to possibly prevent autism once scientists better understand which environmental exposures are most likely to cause children to develop autism in the womb. The idea is that each Center established under this legislation would develop a certain niche of autism expertise. Such areas could include: specific genetic markers, early prenatal maternal drug and other exposures; and investigating other autism spectrum disorders.

Mr. Speaker, CDC has already established a pilot program—an autism epidemiology center—near Atlanta, Georgia. The limited but promising results from this initiative points to the fact that current understanding of autism is woefully inadequate and that better surveillance and monitoring of developmental disabilities like autism are critical to providing answers and hope to the parents of nearly 500,000 autistic persons in America.

A TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE
JERRY SOLOMON

SPEECH OF

HON. JOE SKEEN

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 6, 1998

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay special recognition to the gentleman from New York (Mr. SOLOMON) who announced retirement from Congress at the end of the 105th Congressional session earlier this year.

I am pleased to have served with Chairman SOLOMON throughout most of his career in the House of Representatives. Working together, we have served as members of the minority and majority party in Congress and have always held principle over politics.

We're going to miss Mr. SOLOMON next year. Under his tenure as Chairman of the Rules Committee since 1995, he has conducted himself and his panel with the utmost of duty and respect for all colleagues in the House of Representatives. Prior to being selected to serve as Chairman of the House Rules Committee in 1995, he served with distinction as a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the House Veterans Affairs panel.

I would also like to commend Mr. SOLOMON for his steadfast support and active leadership for a strong national defense throughout his entire membership in the House of Representatives. We're all proud of his service with the United States Marines during the Korean War.

Prior to coming to Congress, Mr. SOLOMON served five years as supervisor of the Town of Queensbury and five years as a Warren County legislator in the New York State Legislature, before being elected to Congress in 1978.

As an active member of the House Task Force on National Defense Policy, Mr. SOLOMON is the former chairman and is still a member of the Prisoners of War/Missing in Action Task Force. Since 1982, Congressman SOLOMON has served as a congressional delegate to the North Atlantic Assembly, the political arm of the NATO Alliance. Presently, he serves as Vice President of that Assembly.

I send my heartfelt thanks for your leadership in the House of Representatives and best

wishes to you and your family during your days of retirement.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE
SIDNEY R. YATES

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN JOSEPH MOAKLEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 1, 1998

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my colleague, a truly great Member of Congress, SID YATES, who will be leaving this House after forty-eight years of distinguished service.

SID began serving his country like I did, the Navy in World War II. He was then elected as the Assistant Attorney General and as the commerce commissioner of the State of Illinois.

First elected to Congress in 1948, before many of us had even started our political careers, SIDNEY served proudly through the 87th Congress until former president John Kennedy appointed him as ambassador to the United Nations. SIDNEY resigned his U.N. position shortly afterwards to regain the title he truly loved, and will hold until next January, Congressman from the ninth congressional district of Illinois.

SID is an exemplary Member of the House Appropriations Committee and a great cardinal. As the Chairman and later the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee for the Department of the Interior and related agencies, he has single-handedly done more to protect the National Endowment for the Arts than just about any member of this House. He kept the NEA going during the late eighties and early nineties and it is thanks to him that arts in America is what it is today.

As a member on the Subcommittee for the Department of Interior and related agencies, SID has gotten funding for dozens of national parks, seashores, and wildernesses.

All of us here in Congress will miss SID as our champion for the arts and for the protection of the environment. His successor will have a hard time living up to the legend of SID YATES. His calm, reasoned thinking and stalwart defense of the environment will be long remembered after his retirement.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure and an honor to serve with SIDNEY YATES and I wish him a long and happy retirement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 7, 1998

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, in order to attend the funeral services for former Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, I was not present for roll call votes 480, 481, and 482. Had I been present, I would have voted nay on roll call 480, and yea on roll call votes 481 and 482.