

spinal nerves both come through an open part of the spine.

While medical science has not yet discovered the exact cause of Spina Bifida—it is a birth defect that can strike anyone—we do know that a woman taking 400 mcg of folic acid whether as part of a multivitamin/drug formula or alone, prior to and in the early weeks of pregnancy, reduces her risk of having a baby with Spina Bifida or another neural tube defect by as much as 70 percent. That is why since February 1996 and at the direction of Food and Drug Administration, all U.S. food manufacturers started adding folic acid to most enriched breads, flours, corn meals, pastas, rice and other grain products to reduce the risk of birth defects in newborns. Following the fortification of cereal grains, the incidences of these types of birth defects decreased by about 20 percent.

However, surveys and research suggest that only about 30 percent of American women consume the daily recommended amount of folic acid. As a result, today in America there are still some 60 million women at risk of having a baby born with Spina Bifida, and everyday, an average of 8 babies are affected by Spina Bifida or a similar birth defect of the brain and spine. Annually, approximately 3,000 pregnancies are affected by these birth defects.

These devastating birth defects cannot be cured, so they must be prevented, and the evidence of folic acid's benefits as a preventative is extremely compelling. The solution is education and awareness. Since 1973, the Spina Bifida Association of America—the nation's only organization solely dedicated to advocating on behalf of the Spina Bifida community—has been leading the charge. Through their almost 60 chapters in more than 125 communities, the SBAA has helped bring thousands of expectant parents together with parents of children who suffer from the disease. This type of one-on-one interaction helps concerned parents get answers to their questions, but most importantly it lends support and gives people essential information and hope. Thanks to SBAA's efforts, millions of people have received vital information about Spina Bifida and how it affects those who live with it; countless women have learned about the importance of taking folic acid prior to pregnancy to reduce the risk of Spina Bifida and other neural tube defects; and, countless individuals afflicted with Spina Bifida have gotten the help they need to live life to its fullest and achieve their full potential.

A very special lady who works with me in my office, Ms. Donna Jones, in fact happens to have Spina Bifida. Since the day she came on board, she has done a great job and helped me understand first-hand the challenge of living with this disease. Ever since I've known her, Donna has always believed that change can come if even one individual believes in themselves and strives to make a difference no matter how hard the challenge. And she has never let the challenge of living with her disease slow her down or stop her from pursuing her dream of making a difference and advocating for persons with disabilities. I was happy to be able to give her the opportunity to come to Washington and try to make her dream a reality; and I have no doubt that because of her tireless efforts to raise awareness of Spina Bifida on Capitol Hill, the incidence of Spina Bifida will decrease

and fewer children will have to endure the road she has had to travel.

Even with all the challenges she faces, I have never seen Donna without a smile on her face. She definitely has an infectious love of life, and when the world looks at her it doesn't see a person unobtrusively going through the motions of everyday life, it sees an outspoken, dynamic and active person willing to get involved in the issues that she cares about, particularly those that affect disabled individuals in our country.

I believe that Donna is perhaps the best advocate the Spina Bifida community could have on Capitol Hill because each and every day, she serves as living proof that someone with Spina Bifida need never take a back seat to anyone. I wish more young people in America had the same fire and commitment as Donna. In fact, it is largely thanks to Donna that I became aware of and joined the Congressional Spina Bifida Caucus. I hope that many of my colleagues listening today will also join the Caucus and work to spread awareness and education about this disease. Working together we can do so much to improve the quality of life to those living with Spina Bifida.

Just this past Wednesday, October 5, 2005, the SBAA's held its 17th Annual Gala here in Washington to benefit the Association and its many chapters around the nation. The event was a tremendous success and the funds raised will help the SBAA and its chapters around the country continue the good work they do in preventing more occurrences of this devastating disease, and reducing the suffering of those 70,000 Americans living with Spina Bifida. I firmly believe that we owe SBAA a great debt for what they have accomplished.

In my home State of Indiana, SBAA, the Spina Bifida Association (SBA) of Central Indiana and the SBA of Northern Indiana have formed a collaborative partnership to make a difference in the lives of Hoosier families living with Spina Bifida by helping them meet the challenges and enjoy the rewards of raising their children. In addition, in response to the devastation of the Gulf region of this country by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Indiana's Spina Bifida chapters answered the call by participating in the Spina Bifida Hurricane Emergency Life Support Program (SBHELSP). Established by the SBAA, the SBHELSP, assisted in getting vitally needed supplies to victims of the hurricanes and to put displaced families affected by Spina Bifida in touch with others who understand their special needs and can help them. I cannot say enough good things about the hard work, dedication and compassion of the volunteers and staff at all the Indiana chapters of SBAA; I can only thank them on behalf of all Hoosiers for all they have done and all that they will continue to do.

SBAA and its local chapters are making a difference one life at a time. With National Spina Bifida Awareness Month upon us again, I would say to my colleagues in closing that the time for us to start making a difference is now.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS,  
FISCAL YEAR 2006

SPEECH OF

**HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN**

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 29, 2005*

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.J. Res. 68, the Continuing Appropriations Resolution for FY 2006. By funding the government at the lower of the House bill, the Senate bill, or current rate, this continuing resolution would require immediate cuts in programs that address the very problems that America's families are facing this fall—unemployment, education, health care, and emergency preparedness.

Right now, there are 7.4 million unemployed Americans—1.4 million of whom have been jobless for more than 26 weeks. Thousands more are applying for benefits in the wake of Katrina and Rita, yet this bill would cut essential Federal training and employment services below last year's level, including \$138 million, or 4 percent, from job training formula grant programs. Just as students are going back to school, this legislation calls for an \$800 million cut in education programs. With 45.8 million uninsured Americans, this bill fails to provide necessary assistance to the Community Health Centers that serve these very citizens. In a time when emergency preparedness should be a high priority, the bill cuts Hospital Preparedness Grants by \$15 million and Public Health Preparedness Grants by \$66 million.

In light of these pressing concerns for all Americans and rising deficits, we must spend our dollars wisely. Yet, we have been presented with a bill that shortchanges the very programs that promise to rebuild our workforce, educate our children and protect the health and well being of our citizens. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting fiscal responsibility by voting against H.J. Res. 68.

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO STARR  
COMMONWEALTH ON THE OCCA-  
SION OF ITS EXPANDED  
MONTCALM SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

**HON. PAUL E. GILLMOR**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 6, 2005*

Mr. GILLMOR. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to pay tribute to a special organization in Ohio's Fifth Congressional District. This October, the Montcalm School for Girls at Starr Commonwealth's Van Wert campus celebrates its first anniversary celebration.

Mr. Speaker, Starr Commonwealth has been nationally recognized for serving thousands of children, families and professionals throughout America. For nearly a century, the dedicated staff of Starr Commonwealth has committed themselves to diffusing violence, healing racism and developing positive environments in the children which they serve. With five locations in Michigan and Ohio, Starr Commonwealth operates dozens of programs for troubled youth and their families. By instilling the core values of integrity, excellence, compassion and faith, Starr Commonwealth has been effective at redirecting misdirected children across our nation.