

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

MOSQUITO ABATEMENT FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRISTOPHER JOHN

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2003

Mr. JOHN. Mr. Speaker, as Congress is about to adjourn for the August recess, I am proud to see that we have taken a very important step in protecting our constituents from a serious public health threat—from the West Nile Virus and other mosquito borne diseases. Today, the House will be considering S. 1015, the Mosquito Abatement for Safety and Health (MASH) Act which is the companion to legislation I introduced this year, H.R. 342.

This legislation is almost identical to legislation which I introduced this year in the House, H.R. 342, in light of the impending threat of the West Nile Virus and the constant threat of mosquito borne illnesses. In Louisiana, mosquitoes are jokingly considered our state bird given their size and numbers. So for me, protecting my constituents from mosquito borne diseases has been a priority.

As you may be aware, mosquito control programs have always been locally sponsored programs funded through a variety of ways—mostly through state and/or local taxes. In light of this, I wanted to find a way for the federal

government to support, not supplant, this funding. Due to the severity of the West Nile outbreak last year, local mosquito control programs are buckling under the financial strain of operating these programs. This is where MASH steps in and how important it is for this program to be authorized and funded.

The MASH Act would establish a matching grant program through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to assist states and counties in the creation or maintenance of a mosquito control program. This program is not designed to be a “federal takeover” of mosquito control programs, but it is designed to recognize the great expense of start-up and maintenance that these programs incur. Given the poor economic situation most of our states and localities are facing, there is simply not enough money that can be dedicated to this need. However, there still remains a major public health threat caused by the prevalence of mosquitoes. There is a federal need here and an appropriate cause of action for the federal government to take.

It has been a rather long road, Mr. Speaker, but I am happy to be here today to recognize the final passage of this legislation and to encourage President Bush to quickly sign it into law. I am excited to return home and tell my constituents that relief is on the way, and I encourage the House and Senate appropriators to fully fund the MASH Act so that we can

begin to provide the financial assistance our localities need and deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I would also be remiss if I did not take a few minutes to recognize all of the hard work so many people have put into getting the MASH Act to this point. This legislation is a great example of bi-partisanship, and it was a pleasure to work with my colleagues across the aisle and across the Capitol on this issue. I must extend my sincerest thanks to Chairman TAUZIN and Ranking Member DINGELL for supporting the MASH Act. Without their help and guidance this bill would have never made it to the President’s desk. In addition, Senators BREAU, LANDREAU, FRIST, GREGG, and KENNEDY worked equally as hard in the Senate to ensure the active support and passage of the MASH Act in their chamber. And as we all know the real work is done by our staffs who spent many hours negotiating and building support for this legislation. I would like to take a second to thank Vera LeBrun, Cheryl Jaeger, John Ford, Paige Jennings, Kathleen Strothman, and Katy French for all of the time and energy they put into this legislation.

Today I stand here with a proud heart and an excited spirit. The MASH Act is so very important to me, and I am thrilled to see this program finally come into existence. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to see this program fully realized.

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