

that only 30% of women take a multivitamin with folic acid before pregnancy. There is an urgent need to teach women about the importance of increasing their consumption of folic acid by taking a daily vitamin pill, eating more fortified cereal grain products and eating food naturally rich in folic acid.

Nationwide, Hispanic women have the highest rates of neural tube defects. In fact, in my home state of California, Hispanic mothers have the highest number of cases of neural tube defects than any other racial group and Mexican-born mothers have twice the risk of having babies with neural tube defects compared to U.S.-born mothers.

The Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1999 will amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for a national folic acid education program to prevent birth defects. This bill authorizes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in partnership with states and local public and private entities, to launch an education and public awareness campaign, conduct research to identify effective strategies for increasing folic acid consumption by women of reproductive capacity, and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies.

The Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1999 is supported by leading health organizations, including the March of Dimes, Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Associates and Practitioners, Council for Responsible Nutrition, American Association of University Affiliated Programs for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Nurse-Midwives, American Public Health Association, Council of Women's and Infants' Specialty Hospitals, Easter Seals, National Association of County and City Health Officials, National Women's Health Network, and the Spina Bifida Association of America.

I would like to recognize the March of Dimes, the National Council on Folic Acid and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for their leadership and steadfast commitment to this issue. I would especially like to thank Jody Adams and her daughter, the March of Dimes Ambassador Kelsey Adams, for their hard work in publicizing this simple, yet highly effective, prevention strategy.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues, Congresswoman JO ANN EMERSON, as well as Senators ABRAHAM, KOHL and BOND for their hard work in raising awareness about this vitally important issue. By getting the message out, we can help families across the country have healthy babies and save the lives of thousands of babies each year.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, on the afternoon of Monday, July 19, 1999, I was unavoidably absent from this chamber and therefore missed rollcall vote number 310 (H.R.

1477), rollcall vote number 309 (H. Con. Res. 121) and rollcall vote number 308 (H.R. 1033). I want the RECORD to show that if I had been able to be present in this chamber when these votes were cast, I would have voted "yea" on each of them.

TEACHER EMPOWERMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1995) to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to empower teachers, improve student achievement through high-quality professional development for teachers, reauthorize the Reading Excellence Act, and for other purposes:

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to oppose H.R. 1995, the Teacher Empowerment Act, and support the Martinez substitute.

As I looked over the materials I had received regarding H.R. 1995, I found myself wondering how the Republican leadership could offer an education bill, a bill for teachers, that is not supported by educators themselves. Nor do parents, Boards of Education, or many others concerned about our education system support it. In fact, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Parent Teachers Association, the National Association of State Boards of Education, Council of Great City Schools, the New York State Education Department, and the New York City Board of Education each oppose this bill. Does this seem right? How can the American public have faith that we are going to improve their schools when nearly all education groups oppose the proposed education bill?

As a newly elected Member, I can tell you that parents in my congressional district are concerned. They want smaller classes. They want assurances that money isn't going to be taken from their low-income school districts and transferred to districts with more resources. They don't want rhetoric. They want results.

H.R. 1995 takes away the guarantee of smaller classes by rolling class size reduction funds into a block grant for professional development purposes and class size reduction. While class size reduction is a "mandatory use" under H.R. 1995, there is no commitment that serious funds will be used for that purpose.

We should not reverse the process that was put into place last year when a bipartisan commitment was made to fund the first installment of a program aimed specifically at reducing class sizes. Instead, we should show our local school districts that we will be there with the followup funds so they can retain the teachers they are hiring this year and continue their class reduction efforts.

Furthermore, H.R. 1995 severely undermines the original goal of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act—to provide assistance to the neediest students. This bill fails to direct sufficient resources to schools that need the most help: the highest poverty districts in each state and district.

Overall, H.R. 1995 would divert resources away from districts, like many of those in New York City, that need the money the most. Altering the funding formula from 80 percent of the funds being allocated to high-poverty districts to having only 50 percent being allocated to districts, combined with the loss of class size reduction funds, would result in a \$22 million loss for New York City's public schools. I am sure that this result will be mimicked in cities and towns across the country.

I know my Republican colleagues will argue that a hold harmless provision has been added to the bill. However, that hold harmless is for the first year only. After that, there is no guarantee that funding for class size reduction will not be dramatically decreased.

We must not abandon our commitment to class size reduction and to helping our neediest students. The Martinez substitute ensures that we honor our commitment to class size reduction. Additionally, the Martinez substitute does not alter the intent of the ESEA, to assist the neediest school districts. We should pass the Martinez substitute, and, if not, we should defeat H.R. 1995.

DICK STRAHM RETIRES AFTER A QUARTER CENTURY AS HEAD COACH OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FINDLAY OILERS

HON. MICHAEL G. OXLEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to salute my good friend Dick Strahm at the close of his 25-year career as head football coach of the University of Findlay Oilers.

The Dick Strahm Era at U of F began in 1975, when he arrived from Kansas State to breathe new life into the program. He immediately set out to recruit the best players available, going all out to lure top prospects to Findlay despite significant shortfalls in available scholarship money. His dedication and commitment to the program were apparent from the beginning, as his team went undefeated in 1978 and won the Division II national title in 1979.

Coach Strahm's successes carried into the 80s, as the 1985 team compiled U of F's first 10-game winning streak in history. The 90s, though, proved to be his best decade at the helm, as he coached his players to an 83-20-3 overall record, a 27-game winning streak, and three more national championships.

During his 24-season tenure with the Oilers, Dick Strahm presided over just two losing seasons, and compiled an overall head coaching record of 183 wins, 64 losses, and five ties. He was named National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Coach of the Year four times, and NAIA District 22 Coach of the Year 12 times. The Oilers will certainly miss his leadership on the field in the seasons ahead.

I join Coach Strahm's current and former players, the University of Findlay family, and