

debilitating birth defect. As co-chair of the Congressional Spina Bifida Caucus, I've had the honor to work with my co-chair, Representative CHRIS SMITH, and SBA to advance Spina Bifida awareness, research, and public health efforts in Congress. Founded in 1973, SBA is the Nation's only organization solely dedicated to advocating on behalf of the Spina Bifida community. Through its nearly 60 chapters in more than 125 communities, the SBA brings expectant parents together with those who have a child with Spina Bifida. This interaction helps to answer questions and concerns, but most importantly it lends much needed support and provides hope and inspiration.

Mr. Speaker, Spina Bifida is a birth defect that can happen to anyone. It is a neural tube defect that occurs in the first month of pregnancy when the spinal column does not close completely. Everyday, an average of eight babies are affected by Spina Bifida and approximately 3,000 pregnancies are affected by this birth defect each year. We do not know the exact cause of it, but research found that if a woman takes 400 mcg of folic acid every day before she becomes pregnant, she reduces her risk of having a baby with Spina Bifida or another neural tube defect by as much as 70 percent.

No two cases of Spina Bifida are ever the same. While Spina Bifida typically causes a host of physical, psychosocial, educational, and vocational challenges, approximately 90 percent of all babies diagnosed with Spina Bifida live into adulthood, approximately 80 percent have normal IQ's, and approximately 75 percent participate in sports and other recreational activities. With access to appropriate and comprehensive care, people with Spina Bifida can live productive and fulfilling lives. The National Spina Bifida Program—which I helped to create with Representative CHRIS SMITH—plays a critical role in improving the quality of life for people with Spina Bifida. I am hopeful that the House allocation of \$6 million for the program in FY 2007 will be maintained in the final FY 2007 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education bill and thank my colleagues in advance for helping to ensure this important funding is provided.

I thank the SBA for its partnership and its commitment to ensuring that we are doing all that we can to reduce and prevent suffering from Spina Bifida and I congratulate the SBA on the occasion of its 18th annual Roast that took place on October 3. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the SBA of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan for working tirelessly to help the families of those living with Spina Bifida meet the challenges and enjoy the rewards of raising their children.

REMEMBERING THE TRAGEDY OF
FLIGHT 587 ON THE FIFTH ANNI-
VERSARY OF THE FATAL CRASH

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 15, 2006

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the lives of the 265 people who lost

their lives on November 12, 2001, when American Airlines Flight 587 crashed into Belle Harbor in Queens, NY.

November 12 will always be a solemn day in hearts of many, including my own. On that fateful day, when the American Airlines Flight 587 crashed into Belle Harbor Queens and killed 260 passengers and 5 residents, it changed the lives of not just their families, but also multiple communities here and in the Dominican Republic.

There is no rhyme or reason to such events. No amount of time or information will ever answer why it happened. Just two months after the tragedy of Sept. 11, the crash reminded us all of how fragile our lives are and how precious are the moments we share daily with our loved ones.

Leaders and government officials on every level of government have tried to do their best to ease the grief of the families and bring some sense of closure to this tragedy. We have organized economic and social resources for relatives, pressed the NTSB to conduct a thorough investigation, and urged American Airlines to do what is right when settling with families.

There are, of course, still some outstanding issues. Yet today, after a lot of hard work, we will see the unveiling of a memorial that is more than a reminder of an unexplained tragedy, but a beautiful testament to how they lived.

They were like millions of dreamers who come to this land, strapped with hopes for a better life for themselves and their children. These immigrants bring a dynamic energy to this land, achievements that can be seen in every part of society. Yet no matter how successful they are here, no matter how grateful they are to their American opportunities, part of their soul still remain in their homelands.

For thousands of Dominicans, that first flight of the morning—or any flight back to the Dominican—is what they dream about when they are pulling the long hours, working multiple jobs and stretching their paychecks to survive in this city. It is more than their reward for a job well done. It is their chance to enjoy a home cooked meal by midday with those they hadn't seen for months or years. It is their chance to feel complete again—if only for just a couple of days.

It is not easy, but it is a sacrifice that many do daily.

And so, while there is much to be sad about today, we can all take comfort that this memorial will always serve as a reminder of the beauty and strength of the Dominican people. A reminder that the families of Flight 587 have not been crushed by the weight of this devastating tragedy or the adversity that has followed.

A reminder that the spirit of a community did not die that day, but instead, continues to grow and inspire others.

TROOPS TO TEACHERS
IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2006

HON. DORIS O. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 15, 2006

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, today, my colleague, Mr. PETRI, and I introduced the Troops to Teachers Improvement Act of 2006. I am proud to bring this bipartisan effort before the House. I first learned about the Troops to Teachers program at a California Purple Heart Veterans Day event in my district. Two different veterans who are participating in the Troops to Teachers program spoke with me about the program and how it had offered them the chance to continue to contribute to our country. After serving their country in the Armed Forces, they were now able to teach in high-need school districts.

With a slogan like, "Proud To Serve Again," Troops to Teachers is a unique program that provides stipends to military retirees to obtain the necessary certification for a second career in teaching. Equally important, the program places much needed math, science and special education teachers in the classroom. In fact, over 46 percent of Troops to Teachers participants teach science, a significant improvement over the national average of 18 percent. Additionally, veterans who participate in the Troops to Teachers program fill another void for male and ethnic minority teachers. Right now, our country is seeing 7 percent of the Nation's teaching force leave every year, and we have a need for highly qualified science and math teachers. Simply put, the Troops to Teachers program has never been more important.

First authorized in 1993, the program was designed to help members of the military obtain teaching credentials to teach in large districts with low-income schools. A variety of retired, separated, active duty and transitioning military members and veterans—including disabled veterans—are eligible to participate. Those who are interested are required to have a bachelor's or advanced degree, or if applying for a vocational or technical teaching position, are required to have at least 6 years of experience in the field. The program has successfully recruited and placed almost 10,000 veterans in school districts since then. In my home State of California, 571 veterans are currently participating in the program.

Unfortunately, a small change under the No Child Left Behind Act, NCLB, of 2001 greatly affected where veterans could teach to fulfill their stipend. In some areas of the country, retiring military and veterans interested in the program now have to drive 50 to 100 miles to find an eligible school. This has resulted in a 20–30 percent drop-off in veteran participation, which has seriously hindered this productive and necessary program.

The bill that my esteemed colleague Mr. PETRI and I are introducing today would fix this error. The bill would allow participants to fulfill their teaching obligation at any school that receives title I funding, and is therefore, considered a high-need school. Prior to the NCLB change, participants were able to fulfill their teaching obligation in any school within