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On multiple occasions, I toured this amazing facility and witnessed the ongoing and award-winning research. I am proud to have it not only in my district, but in my hometown.

THE OMNIBUS AUTISM HEARINGS

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 19, 2007

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about the Omnibus Autism Hearing which started on June 11, 2007, down at the U.S. Federal Claims Court here in Washington, DC. At issue are the 4,800 claims against the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program filed by parents of autistic children who believe, as I do, that thimerosal—the mercury-based preservative in vaccines—caused their children's disorders.

There are many people in our health agencies, in the pharmaceutical industry and here in Congress who say that there is no the scientific evidence linking thimerosal and autism. However, during my tenure as chairman of Government Reform Committee (1997–2002), and as chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness (2003–2005), I chaired numerous hearings examining the alarming increase in autism in this country over the last several decades. In the 1980s, roughly one in 10,000 American children was diagnosed with some kind of autism spectrum disorder. Today that number has risen to 1 in 150. I believe, as do many credible scientists and researchers, that the clear correlation between the dramatic rise in the number of autism cases, and the rapid expansion of the childhood vaccination schedule during that 20-year period, points to the mercury-based preservative thimerosal—routinely used in pediatric vaccines during the period—as a contributing factor to our country's literal epidemic of autism. In fact, I firmly believe my own grandson became autistic after receiving nine shots in 1 day, seven of which contained thimerosal. In fact, Dr. Bernard Rimland—founder and director of the Autism Research Institute—testified before the committee that classic autism, (noticeable from birth) has largely been replaced by late-onset or “acquired autism”; a form of autism in which children are born normally developing but later regress into autism in the second year of life. He was one of the first to point to environmental insult through vaccine injury as a possible leading contributing factor.

The truth is that since the initiation of my vaccine investigation, two schools of science have evolved leading to two very different conclusions. The first, largely funded by the Centers for Disease Control, consist of epidemiological evaluations in Denmark that look at medical files in individuals who developed autism and deciding whether or not thimerosal exposure was more predominant in the autism patients. Those who have focused solely on the epidemiology research have concluded

that there is no relationship between vaccine injury and the onset of autism. However, once published, these studies were discovered to have many methodological flaws. For example, using individuals in Denmark did not provide a true comparison to the U.S. vaccine schedule, and by the CDC's own admission, the study could not really provide any true conclusion as to whether or not a subset of the population—because of vaccine exposure to mercury or some other vaccine injury—developed autism.

The second school of research has conducted so-called “hard” science; providing objective measures through laboratory and animal research. For example, Dr. Hornig at Columbia University replicated the thimerosal exposure in vaccines in a mouse study and discovered mice exposed to thimerosal had both behavioral and biological responses—displaying autism like behaviors and exhibiting white matter changes in the brain that were measurable. Other laboratory research has shown that thimerosal exposure affects the protective sheath of the neurofibrils in the brain as well as the IGF-I molecule. And Dr. Jill James at the University of Arkansas has shown that thimerosal exposure affects the methylation process—the mechanism used to regulate genes and protect DNA from some types of damage.

The most recent hard science study to be published is from Dr. Burbacher, a leading expert on mercury, who investigated the different affect methyl mercury and ethyl mercury had on primates. He found that ethylmercury—the form of mercury in thimerosal—stays in the brain (doing more harm) than methylmercury.

The bottom line is that mercury is a base element and the most toxic substance known to science outside of radioactive materials; and each of these hard science studies, and more, show that it is biologically plausible for mercury exposure in vaccines to cause the onset of autism and provide tantalizing pieces in the puzzle about how.

My support for the link between thimerosal and autism, especially in open congressional hearings has caused many people to throw around the accusation that I am “anti-vaccine.” My response to that is that vaccines are the only medications that are mandatory for Americans to receive and as such we have an even greater obligation to ensure that they are as safe as possible. In addition, experience tells us that, as with any other epidemic, while there may be underlying genetic susceptibilities, there usually is some type of environmental trigger as well, such as a virus, fungus, exposure to heavy metals, pollutants, or whatever. There has never, to the best of my knowledge, been a purely genetic epidemic. So, genetics alone simply cannot explain how we went from 1 in 10,000 children with autism spectrum disorders 20 years ago to 1 in 150 today.

No one has ever identified a positive health benefit to mercury in the human body. Thus, it was sound public health policy to eliminate mercury from thermometers, blood pressure gauges, light switches, cosmetics, teething powder, horse liniment, hat-making materials, smokestack emission, and mining operations. It would also be sound public health policy to eliminate mercury from all vaccines.

But Madam Speaker, getting the mercury out of all vaccines is only the first step. We also have a responsibility to help all of the

children who have already been injured by mercury in vaccines. That is why the outcome of the Omnibus Autism Hearing is so critically important. In the 1980s, Congress created the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program to shield medical professionals and vaccine manufacturers from liability if an individual suffered an adverse event from receiving vaccines. The compensation fund, which currently contains about \$2.5 billion, is financed by a tax on pediatric vaccines. We created VICP to protect the vaccine supply and to insure that all who were injured by a vaccine would receive compensation in what was supposed to be a no-fault, easy to use manner. Congress intended for families to be compensated quickly and fairly; and when the evidence was close as to whether or not the medical condition in question was vaccine related or not—as is the case with thimerosal—the court should always err in favor of the injured. But over the years the system has broken and what was supposed to be quick and fair has become slow and contentious; which is why today 4,800 families are fighting in court to be heard. They have waited a long time for their day in court and I am pleased that the court is providing the transcripts online quickly and that audio streaming on the internet is being provided for the thousands of families who are not able to travel to Washington and actually be in the courtroom during the proceedings.

As the Omnibus hearings proceed, I hope that all of the evidence regarding vaccine injury will be received by the courts and given a full and fair review. I believe the families of these autistic children deserve to be compensated for their vaccine injury as Congress intended when it created VICP. I believe the science is there to prove this case and I am hopeful that the court will agree and at the end of this arduous process these 4,800 families will finally get justice.

ARC FUNDING

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 19, 2007

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, “a rising tide,” President Kennedy told us, “lifts all boats.” And so one of President Kennedy's legacies was created in 1965 with a unique mission to serve a unique part of the Nation, the Appalachian region.

Historically, the counties of Appalachia have “faced high levels of poverty and economic distress resulting from geographic isolation and inadequate infrastructure.”

It was with these concerns in mind that ARC was created and it is these concerns ARC has been addressing vigorously for the past 40 years.

Take for example the area of transportation, a major focus for ARC. ARC was developed, in part, because of the severe isolation experienced in Appalachia and that in order to develop Appalachia and give its people an opportunity to compete, a system of highways was needed. Enter the Appalachian Development Highway System, which was created to serve the transportation needs of Appalachian residents by assisting in the construction of highways so critically needed by Appalachian communities for economic growth and development.

The ADHS now encompasses over 3,000 miles of Appalachian highways and nearly 85 percent of those roads are complete or under construction. The ADHS is truly a success story for ARC and all of Appalachia. Despite the President's recent budget, which requests eliminating funding for the Appalachian Development Highway System, it is my strong conviction that this program be continued at the agreed upon level set forth in SAFETEA-LU.

If Members review a recent report, entitled, *The Potential for an Uncontrolled Mass Evacuation of the DC Metro Area Following a Terrorist Attack: A report of Survey Findings*, by West Virginia University, it becomes readily clear that the ARC's development highways will critically serve another national purpose in times of "mass spontaneous evacuations," particularly from here, Madam Speaker, our Nation's Capital. This may surprise many, but about 83 percent of the people here plan on probably leaving, and 88 percent of those plan on leaving by car.

Without doubt Appalachia, West Virginia, in particular, must be ready to handle such future fateful events. The ARC can be a catalyst in preparing for such an eventuality, but they do not have the resources, nor the mandate to fulfill this function. I hope this lone call, will signal, first the need, and secondly the will, of this Member of Congress, that we need full partners in the federal government to work with ARC and other appropriate agencies to plan for evacuations now rather than some distant day.

ARC has also been a responsible steward of the federal funds it has received over the years. For example, in FY 2006, across all investment areas, each dollar of ARC funding was matched by \$3.14 in non-ARC public project funding, and each ARC dollar invested leveraged \$11.55 in private investment in ARC projects over time.

And while a major focus of ARC remains on highways and Appalachian transportation infrastructure, as the times have changed so has ARC.

As much of the United States has been able to take advantage of the technological boom of the late 20th and early 21st Centuries, Appalachia once again is in danger of being left behind and unable to compete in the global marketplace.

In the most recent FCC data on high-speed connections for Internet access, released on January 31, 2007, you can track the Appalachian mountain range by just how spotty the provider coverage is on the FCC's provider map. In fact, West Virginia is significantly below the average in broadband use nationwide.

Again, ARC is there to offer significant support, bringing broadband access to our communities, which is essential to leveling the playing field and giving our communities an opportunity to compete. Schools, businesses, local governments and individual homes all have benefited from ARC involvement in the expansion of broadband access in Appalachia, and continue to do so.

I have been working with ARC, private telecommunications companies, and local economic development leaders to bring broadband technology into southern West Virginia. For example, through the E-commerce training initiatives being offered by ARC and others we are working to connect local small businesses to broadband, opening doors to

Internet sales and services that just weren't there a couple of years ago.

It is ARC's ability to serve its mission by adapting its actions to fit the times that makes ARC such an invaluable resource to Appalachia and the Nation. From the Appalachian Development Highway System to the E-commerce and broadband initiatives, ARC continues to serve its mission by advocating for and partnering with the people of Appalachia to create opportunities for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life.

I applaud the efforts of Federal Co-Chair Anne Pope who, as a native daughter of Appalachia, executes so well the mission of ARC in each of Appalachia's communities. I have said this before and am happy to do so again on the record, Anne is one of the finest Federal Co-Chairs to ever serve the people of Appalachia and I look forward to our continued strong relationship serving the needs of southern West Virginians, together.

I strongly support ARC, its mission and the incredibly successful initiatives it has undertaken to better the lives of the people of Appalachia and West Virginia. It is why I signed a bipartisan letter of support for increasing the funding which the ARC receives, which I request be included in the RECORD, and I continue to support strong and robust funding to maintain the vision which President Kennedy laid before us, some 40 years ago.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

Washington, DC, April 24, 2007.

HON. PETER VISLOSKEY,

Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, House Committee on Appropriations, Washington, DC.

HON. DAVID HOBSON,

Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, House Committee on Appropriations, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN VISLOSKEY AND RANKING MEMBER HOBSON: We respectfully request that you include funding in the amount of \$75 million for the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) in the Fiscal Year 2008 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill.

Since 1965, the ARC has contributed significantly to improving the quality of life for the 23 million Americans in the Region by working closely with its federal, state, and private sector partners and local communities.

As Representatives from Appalachia, we see first hand the successes that have resulted from the ARC's economic development initiatives. For example, the Region's poverty rate has been cut in half, the infant mortality rate has been reduced by two-thirds, the high school graduation rate has increased by over 70 percent—comparing favorably with the national average, and the Commission's initiatives have helped create approximately 1.6 million jobs.

We are requesting this modest increase to help the ARC address more aggressively the Region's infrastructure deficiencies and the continuing human capital and leadership deficits which result in concentrated areas of poverty and unemployment. Over the last ten years, funding for the ARC has remained level at around \$65 million and the Region continues to receive less federal assistance per capita than the rest of the country.

The ARC has been a responsible steward of the federal funds it has received over the years. For example, in FY 2006, across all investment areas, each dollar of ARC funding was matched by \$3.14 in non-ARC public project funding, and each ARC dollar in-

vested leveraged \$11.55 in private investment in ARC projects over time.

With the advent of the global economy, the ARC faces more complex and profound challenges while third world conditions still exist in the Region and require the Commission's continued focus. For example, according to a recent analysis completed by the University of North Carolina Environmental Financing Center, the counties in the Region require estimated investments of \$11.4 billion to meet current drinking water needs and \$14.3 billion for wastewater needs. This is substantially more than the funding that is currently available from combined state and federal programs. Without basic infrastructure, economic development, and improvements in the overall quality of life, the Appalachian Region will continue to lag well behind the rest of the nation.

Currently, the rural areas in the Region lag behind the nation in access to cable modem and DSL services and other forms of high speed internet access. We know the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure throughout the Region has become an absolute necessity if Appalachians are going to compete in the national and global economies. Today's globalization comes with a higher threshold for success: high technology jobs rather than manual labor, college education rather than basic literacy and the need for modern telecommunications infrastructure to facilitate economic development.

Despite the impressive accomplishments of the ARC, the 410-county Region still faces a complex set of economic and social challenges and will need continued support from Congress if the Commission's goal for the Region—socio-economic parity with the rest of the nation—is to be reached.

Looking to the future, the ARC expects to capitalize on the Region's abundant energy assets to promote job creation in the energy sector with energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives as well as with conventional fuels.

Appalachia's future remains at risk. Therefore, on behalf of the citizens in the Region we urge you to support a funding level of \$75 million for FY 2008. We believe this level will allow the agency to continue its important work to improve the quality of life in Appalachia, particularly in the poorest and most underdeveloped counties.

Thank you for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Zack Space, David Scott, David Davis, Heath Shuler, Michael A. Arcuri, Lincoln Davis, Roscoe G. Bartlett, Spencer Bachus, Rick Boucher, Charles A. Wilson, Phil English, Shelley Moore Capito, Tim Holden, Christopher P. Carney, Ed Whitfield, Hank Johnson, Jr., Jason Altmire, Paul E. Kanjorski, John J. Duncan, Jr., Nick J. Rahall, II, Brian Higgins, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Geoff Davis, Chip Pickering, and Phil Gingrey.

Members of Congress.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JULIA CARSON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 19, 2007

Ms. CARSON. Madam Speaker, on Monday, June 18, 2007, I was unable to vote on rollcall Nos. 499 through 501. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on all of these amendments.