


MEMORANDUM

Date: November 1, 1993

To: Senator Dole

From: Alec Vachon 

Re: Floor Statement on Spina Bifida

- \* Spina Bifida Association of America asks if you would place attached statement in the Congressional Record. Contains basic information about advances in prevention and treatment of spina bifida, and will be used as part of their public education campaign.
- \* You were Honorary Co-Chairman again this year of their annual fundraising Roast and sponsored last year in the Senate a joint resolution designating September as National Spina Bifida Prevention Month.

~~SHALL~~ I HAVE THIS STATEMENT INSERTED IN RECORD?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES                      \_\_\_\_\_ NO



Spina-  
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**SENATOR BOB DOLE  
FLOOR STATEMENT  
RECENT ADVANCES IN PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF SPINA BIFIDA**

MR. PRESIDENT, I WOULD LIKE TO BRING TO THE ATTENTION OF MY COLLEAGUES INFORMATION ABOUT SOME IMPORTANT NEW ADVANCES IN PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF SPINA BIFIDA. SPINA BIFIDA IS A BIRTH DEFECT RESULTING FROM THE FAILURE OF THE SPINAL TUBE TO CLOSE PROPERLY DURING THE FIRST MONTH OF FETAL DEVELOPMENT. IT IS THE SINGLE MOST COMMON BIRTH DEFECT IN THIS NATION, AFFECTING ABOUT ONE OF EVERY 1,000 NEWBORNS EACH YEAR. SPINA BIFIDA IS MORE COMMON THAN MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY, MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS, CYSTIC FIBROSIS, AND POLIO COMBINED.

MR. PRESIDENT, SPINA BIFIDA CAN BE SERIOUSLY DISABLING -- WITH VARYING DEGREES OF PARALYSIS, LOSS OF SENSATION IN THE LOWER LIMBS, AND BOWEL AND BLADDER COMPLICATIONS. IT IS OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY HYDROCEPHALUS, A CONDITION INVOLVING ACCUMULATION OF FLUID IN THE BRAIN. FORTUNATELY, THANKS TO MEDICAL ADVANCES SPINA BIFIDA IS NO LONGER NECESSARILY FATAL AND THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF PEOPLE BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA LIVE A NORMAL LIFE SPAN. HOWEVER, EXTENSIVE THERAPY--BOTH PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL--IS CRITICAL FOR THESE CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS. WITH PROPER CARE, THEY CAN ENJOY INDEPENDENT AND FULFILLING LIVES.

BUT THERE IS MORE GOOD NEWS. RECENTLY, A MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGH HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE TO DRAMATICALLY REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF SPINA BIFIDA. FOLIC ACID SUPPLEMENTS, A B VITAMIN, HAVE BEEN SHOWN TO PREVENT SPINA BIFIDA BY AS MUCH AS 50%. IN FACT, THE UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE RECOMMENDS THAT ALL WOMEN CAPABLE OF BECOMING PREGNANT CONSUME 0.4 MILLIGRAMS OF FOLIC ACID DAILY TO REDUCE THE RISK OF HAVING A BIRTH AFFECTED BY SPINA BIFIDA OR OTHER NEURAL TUBE DEFECTS. *check*

MR. PRESIDENT, OCTOBER HAS BEEN TRADITIONALLY DESIGNATED AS NATIONAL SPINA BIFIDA PREVENTION MONTH. BUT THIS DESIGNATION IS ONLY INTENDED TO REMIND US OF THE IMPORTANCE OF YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITIES TO EDUCATE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ABOUT THIS BIRTH DEFECT AND THE IMPRESSIVE WORK OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC HEALTH CARE OFFICIALS IN TREATING SPINA BIFIDA. IN ALERTING THE PUBLIC TO THE SIMPLE MEASURES NECESSARY TO PREVENT THIS DEFECT, WE WILL MAKE IMPORTANT INROADS IN REDUCING ITS OCCURRENCE.

11/1/93

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