

Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34)
NEWBORN SCREENING SAVES LIVES
(House of Representatives - April 08, 2008)

“The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. *Roybal-Allard*) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Madam Speaker, this week the Nation is celebrating National Public Health Week, and I can think of no better way for this House to have begun the celebration than by the passage of today's packet of critical bipartisan public health legislation.

I commend Chairman *Dingell* and Chairman PALLONE for their leadership in helping to pass this group of bills which will make a significant contribution to improving our environment and the quality of our Nation's health.

I am particularly pleased that the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act, S. 1858, as amended by my bill, H.R. 3825, was one of the public health bills that passed today.

I extend my sincere thanks to my colleagues, Congressman MICHAEL SIMPSON, TOM REYNOLDS, and HENRY WAXMAN for their original cosponsorship of H.R. 3825, the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act. Their commitment and steadfast efforts have helped make possible the passage of this significant piece of legislation.

In addition, I thank Senators DODD, ORRIN HATCH, HILLARY CLINTON, and EDWARD KENNEDY for championing the Senate companion bill, S. 1858.

I also thank the coalition of public health groups, especially the March of Dimes, for working with us over the last 4 years on this critical issue.

Madam Speaker, approximately 5,000 babies are born each year with detectable and treatable disorders. Forty years ago, these disorders would have gone undetected until symptoms appeared. This resulted in otherwise preventable deaths or lifelong suffering from disabling consequences such as mental retardation and cerebral palsy.

Today we have the ability to give a newborn baby a simple blood test that can identify many life-threatening genetic illnesses before symptoms occur. Fortunately, this early identification makes it possible to treat babies in time to prevent severe disorders, serious complications and even death.

Yet tragically in the United States, approximately 1,000 infants a year die or are permanently disabled from these treatable disorders. These preventable tragedies are largely due to the fact that our country lacks a national newborn screening standard. Without a national standard, our States have great disparity and variation in the quality and number of newborn screening tests an infant may receive.

Today's passage of Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act is a major step toward correcting these disparities because it encourages States to uniformly test for and keep updated a scientifically recommended panel of disorders. And it makes available the resources States need to expand and improve their newborn screening programs.

The Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act also has the potential to save millions of dollars in health care costs for families and States because it empowers parents and health care professionals with knowledge about the importance of newborn screening and follow-up care.

In addition, the bill requires the Centers for Disease Control to ensure the quality of laboratories involved in newborn screening and it establishes a system for collecting and analyzing data to help researchers develop better detection, prevention, and treatment tragedies.

Madam Speaker, by passing the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act, this Congress seized an opportunity to protect vulnerable babies from undue suffering and death and to give them a chance for a long and healthy life. Once again, I thank my colleagues for voting to pass this critical piece of public health legislation.”

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