



Wolf Pushes For Lyme Disease Funding

By Julia O'Donoghue
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U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-10) is optimistic that the federal government will significantly increase the amount of funding it devotes to Lyme disease research and prevention next year.

At Wolf's urging, the U.S. House of Representatives' appropriations committee voted to increase the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Lyme disease budget from about \$5.3 million to \$8.9 million as part of the 2010 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education spending bill last week. Wolf, chairman of the House Lyme Disease Caucus, is a member of the appropriations committee.

The congressman's chief of staff, Dan Scandling, said he does not expect the U.S. Senate to change the House bill's language regarding Lyme disease. He is optimistic the Lyme disease allocation will eventually pass with the full federal budget.

Wolf became concerned about Lyme disease after a group of constituents who had been impacted by the illness met with him last year. His office decided to conduct an informational meeting about Lyme in August 2008, which they expected about 30 residents to attend.

When 300 people showed up to Wolf's event, many relaying stories about how Lyme had devastated their lives, the congressman knew the disease had become a widespread problem in his district.

Officials from Fairfax and Loudoun counties have said Lyme disease was on the rise in their localities.

Fairfax's annual rate of Lyme disease cases went from 4.5 per 100,000 residents in 2006 to over 12 per 100,000 residents in 2007. In Loudoun, the number of reported Lyme disease cases went from 29 in 1999 to more than 500 in 2007.

In his bill, Wolf calls for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and other federal health organizations to look into the effects of chronic Lyme disease as part of the funding agreement.

Other public officials have also started to grow concerned about Lyme.

Fairfax supervisors Patrick Herrity (R-Springfield) and Michael Frey (R-Sully) hosted an informational meeting on Lyme disease July 22 at 7 p.m. in Centreville High School.

The Loudoun County Public Library has sponsored a similar meeting at 9 a.m. July 25 in Leesburg's Rust library.