

Rothman Writes President Bush about the Combating Autism Act

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Rothman to Bush: Help Ensure the Combating Autism Act is Funded

(Washington, DC)—Yesterday, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) asked President Bush to work with Democrats in Congress to ensure that the Combating Autism Act is fully funded. The legislation describes the need for \$945 million in federal funding, but does not actually provide any money.

“The Combating Autism Act provides hope that America will increase its commitment to fighting autism. However, to create real progress, the research, education and treatment called for by the Combating Autism Act must be fully funded,” wrote Rothman in his letter to President Bush. “While you are formulating your [fiscal year 2008] budget, I ask that you specifically earmark \$945 million for the Combating Autism Act. By doing so, you can help ensure that the Combating Autism Act is not just a promise made, but also a promise kept.”

Rothman’s letter to President Bush was in response to the President’s statement earlier this week that the Combating Autism Act signifies “a day of hope” for the millions of Americans whose lives are affected by autism. However, the \$945 million called for in the act must pass a separate congressional process referred to as appropriations. Typically, appropriations decisions are made with the President’s budget request in mind.

“It has been estimated that the cost of life-long care for someone with autism can be reduced by 2/3rd with early diagnosis and intervention,” wrote Rothman. “Funding autism screening and intervention programs is a worthwhile use of federal money. More important, this funding is an investment in the quality of life of millions of Americans who are affected by autism.”

Specifically, the Combating Autism Act authorizes \$645 million for the National Institutes of Health, \$210 million for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, and the remainder of the funds for various education, intervention, and treatment projects. This act lays an important foundation for autism funding, but does not actually provide any money. That awaits the fiscal year 2008 appropriation process mentioned above, which begins in January 2007. Rothman voted for the Combating Autism Act on December 6, 2006 and the President signed the bill into law on December 19th.

Rothman is a member of the Congressional Autism Caucus and has testified on behalf of the autism community before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education.

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Related: Rep. Rothman's statement about the Combating Autism Act.