

# SDNL Debuts Congressional Column

## Congressman Curbelo on Zika Virus



Congressman Carlos Curbelo will write a bi-weekly column for the South Dade News Leader for the Opinions page.

**Editor's Note:** *The following is the first of a regular bi-weekly column penned by a sitting congressman. In the following weeks you will be able to find this feature at the top of the Opinion page every other week. It is our hope that this column will serve our readers with an insight into the daily workings of your elected congressman. Congressman Carlos Curbelo will start our feature, however we will reserve the space for anyone elected in the district. If that is to change in November, we will offer the same opportunity to whoever is elected. We have challenged Mr. Curbelo to use this space to truly connect with the people of South Dade and their issues. We are confident this will not just be a campaign ad. If you disagree, or would like to keep the column honest-*

*please write to us at [FMARADIAGA@Calkins.com](mailto:FMARADIAGA@Calkins.com) and we will make your concerns heard.*

### Zika and Miami Dade

**By Carlos Curbelo**  
Miami-Dade County has the highest reported number of Zika virus cases in the United States, with 51 individuals who have been infected. Florida also has the most reported cases in the country with 132 — accounting for 19% of all cases in the country. These statistics come directly from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), making the threat of Zika a very present, dangerous reality for South Floridians.

Dr. Jason James, Chairman of Baptist Health South Florida's Department of Obstetrics  
**See ZIKA 2A**

## ZIKA

*continued from 1A*

and Gynecology, recently referred to Miami as “ground zero” for a potential Zika virus outbreak. We have seen the images of infants who have been infected, and we have heard from medical professionals about the repercussions that this disease will have on their physical and neurological development. As a Member of Congress representing the Southernmost district in the continental United States, an area that attracts millions of tourists annually, including tourists from countries where Zika is more prevalent, it is paramount that we address this virus with the utmost



attention, tact, and care.

Climate and tourism aren't the only factors that make Florida a potential breeding ground for the virus. *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*, the mos-

quitoes that carry the disease, are present in the Sunshine State. These mosquitoes look similar to any other to the untrained eye, making it difficult to detect differences and

making them impossible to avoid. As we prepare for the possibility of local transmission of the Zika virus in the United States, it's necessary that the federal government provide

adequate funding to ensure that Americans and our families remain safe from this disease.

I've been a proponent of the Administration's request that \$1.9 billion in new emergency federal funds be allocated towards Zika eradication efforts. To address this, both the House and Senate introduced and passed legislation in their own chambers. When the House considered the Zika Response Appropriations Act of 2016, which would provide funding only through September 30 of this year, I did not support it. Zika will not cease to exist when the fiscal year comes to a close, and this bill did nothing to guarantee that additional funds would be made available after the September 30th deadline. The Senate's bill, though better, also did not fulfill the Administration's

request of \$1.9 billion to combat Zika. At \$1.1 billion, it is significantly closer, but still falls short. That is why Senator Rubio and I held a press conference in Miami to urge our colleagues to pass appropriate Zika funding. As two legislators from the state of Florida, we understand the real threat that Zika poses, and we want to keep our constituents, and all Americans safe.

In the upcoming weeks, both Chambers of Congress will collaborate on finding a solution to combat Zika. As we move forward, I will continue advocating for the full funding of \$1.9 billion. Our communities, colleagues, and families require it. We must do all we can to ensure that Americans are protected.