

Urgency

LYME

Amid the flurry of action during the winter budget debate and the maneuvering under way in advance of this summer's landmark votes on Dulles Rail, one significant action that may have been overlooked was the Board of Supervisors' effort to make understanding, treating and preventing Lyme disease a top community priority.

We have known for years that Loudoun is the state's leader in Lyme cases. We have known about the difficulties patients, doctors and insurance companies have faced in dealing with the ailment. Most of us know someone who has been touched by the disease. Some have attended forums organized by Rep. Frank Wolf to raise awareness of the issue or have heard Health Department Director David Goodfriend's call to take precautions.

What we have not done is react with a sense of urgency to combat the epidemic that has hit our community harder than any other.

The board's declaration of Lyme Disease Awareness Year in Loudoun provides the opportunity to do that.

To accomplish the task, this board and its constituency (you) must ensure that this declaration is not simply a routine resolution to bring fleeting attention to some specific cause or group, like dozens of others adopted and read aloud at board meetings throughout the year; it must be a call to action.

The campaign to elevate awareness, improve treatments and curb additional infection must involve a broad cross-section of the community infrastructure—the hospital and the county's doctors, the schools and the county's public and private school teachers, the universities and their students and faculty and families who have first-hand knowledge of the disease and its impacts. Also, the scale of the infection rate in Loudoun merits national attention and the board's campaign should include efforts to bring in top medical and scientific talents to target the disease in this lively laboratory.

In declaring this to be the year of Lyme disease awareness, county supervisors are providing the opportunity for the community to join together to address one of the fastest growing health threats facing our families and our neighbors. It is an effort worth your involvement.