



STATEMENT BY TRUST FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH ON DELAYS IN PANDEMIC FLU PREPAREDNESS FUNDING

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WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 17, 2005 – The following is a statement issued today by Jeffrey Levi, PhD, Senior Policy Advisor of Trust for America's Health (TFAH):

“We are extremely disappointed that funding for pandemic influenza preparedness was not included in H.R. 3010, the FY 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill. On October 27th, with bipartisan support, the Senate adopted an amendment to the legislation that would have provided \$ 7.9 billion to fund state and local public health preparedness efforts, bolster pandemic flu vaccine production capacity and allow the government to purchase antiviral treatment medications and other medical supplies necessary to combat a pandemic. Just days later, on November 1st, the President sent an emergency budget request to Congress, asking for \$7.1 billion dollars to support pandemic preparedness activities. Differences between the Administration and Senate funding proposals could have been resolved had there been the political will to do so.

Sadly, the Congress has chosen to delay consideration of pandemic flu funding until it returns from its Thanksgiving break. At that point, an emergency supplemental to provide additional funds to the victims of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma may become the only possible legislative vehicle left for pandemic preparedness appropriations. The American people are being asked to wait until December, at the very earliest, for Congress and the President to provide the funds to protect them should pandemic flu hit our shores.

As a result of this delay, we are not one day closer to purchasing the large quantities of antiviral medication needed to treat Americans who become ill from pandemic flu.

We are not one day closer to investing in the research, technology and facilities to enhance the nation's pandemic flu vaccine production capacity.

And, we are not one day closer to providing the front line troops -- state and local public health departments -- with the resources they will need to identify, contain and treat pandemic flu if and when it hits their communities.

Congress and the Administration are counting on the gift of time. We can only hope that Mother Nature accommodates them.”

TFAH pandemic flu-related materials are available at: <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/flu/>

Trust for America's Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority.