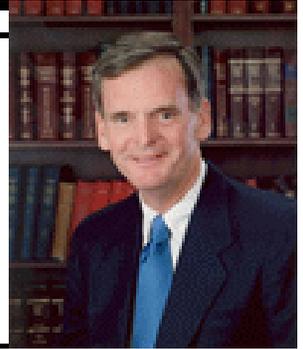

NEWS RELEASE

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SENATOR GREGG TO MOVE SMALLPOX COMPENSATION LEGISLATION THROUGH SENATE

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) will introduce Secretary Tommy Thompson and the Health and Human Services Department's new Smallpox Vaccination Compensation Plan in the United States Senate.

As Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee, Chairman Gregg will work with the Administration and Senate Leadership to move the Administration's proposal through the Senate quickly.

"With the threat of war looming on the horizon this bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation in the United States Senate today. This isn't a health issue or a legal issue. It's a vital national security issue. We need to make sure the American people are prepared for and protected from attack. I look forward to working with the President and my colleagues in the Senate to make this compensation program a reality as soon as possible," said Senator Gregg.

The proposed compensation program includes four elements similar to the benefits package currently available to police officers and firefighters. Under the Public Safety Officers Benefit (PSOB) program, administered by the Department of Justice, the federal government currently pays a \$262,100 death and a \$262,100 permanent and total disability benefit to police officers and firefighters. State and local governments provide short-term disability benefits and health care benefits.

The benefits package would be administered by HHS and be retroactive to cover those who already have been vaccinated under the program. The four elements of the plan include:

- Permanent and total disability benefit: HHS would create a benefit modeled on the PSOB to offer a \$262,100 permanent and total disability benefit for disability caused by the administration of the vaccine. This benefit would be paid regardless of other death benefits available to the individual.

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- Death benefit: HHS would create a benefit modeled on the PSOB to offer a \$262,100 death benefit

for deaths caused by administration of the vaccine. This benefit would be paid regardless of other death benefits available to the individual (except the approximately one-third of first responders who are already covered by the PSOB).

- Temporary or partial disability benefit: HHS would compensate individuals for two-thirds of lost wages after the fifth day from work, up to a maximum of \$50,000.
- Health care benefit: HHS would compensate individuals above for their reasonable out-of-pocket medical expenses. This benefit would be secondary to any health insurance benefit that might be available to the individual.

Additionally, HHS would provide compensation to third parties who contract vaccinia from public health and medical response team workers who have been vaccinated.

HHS and CDC are working with state and local governments to vaccinate health care workers and other crucial personnel - as part of Smallpox Response Teams - to volunteer to receive the smallpox vaccine. All states have submitted smallpox response plans and as of March 4, 45 jurisdictions have vaccinated nearly 12,404 individuals - up from 7,354 one week earlier and 4,213 two weeks ago.

Pre-attack vaccination of these teams will allow them to vaccinate the American public in the event of an attack. If there is a release of smallpox, we will immediately make vaccine available to the general public. HHS currently has enough unlicensed vaccine to protect every American. HHS will have enough licensed vaccine sometime in 2004.

The existing smallpox vaccine is very effective in preventing the disease, but it carries a risk of serious health consequences - including death in 1 or 2 out of every 1 million people vaccinated. Between 14 and 52 out of every 1 million may experience potentially life-threatening reactions when given the existing smallpox vaccine.

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