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CONTACT: Laura Capps/Melissa Wagoner
(202) 224-2633

**KENNEDY CONTINUES STEPS TO PROTECT AGAINST BIRD FLU
INTRODUCES PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE ACT**
(As Prepared for Delivery)

It's a privilege to join Senator Reid, Senator Obama, Senator Bayh and other Democratic colleagues on this legislation to improve the nation's preparedness to deal with the danger of avian flu.

I look forward to working with the chairman of our health committee, Senator Enzi and our subcommittee chairman, Senator Burr, to report legislation that includes the best proposals on preparedness, and improves research on new medications and vaccines.

We need to act, because the Administration has failed to prepare adequately for a flu pandemic. The danger of a major hurricane hitting New Orleans was ignored until it was too late. We can't make the same mistake with pandemic flu. We can't afford to leave preparations to chance, or wait until disaster strikes to take action.

An effective plan is fundamental. I wrote to HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson in January 2004, urging him to release a plan. A year and a half later, there is still no final plan. We should be *implementing* a flu plan now – not waiting to read it for the first time.

Other nations have recognized the urgency of proper planning. Japan issued its pandemic preparedness plan in 1997. Brazil in 1999. Canada, Britain and Australia each came out with their plan over a year ago. They're putting their plans into action right now -- but we're still waiting for ours to be released.

Around the world, nations have taken steps to stockpile enough medication to treat the victims of flu. Britain has ordered enough to treat 25 percent of the population. France has the same coverage. Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and many other nations have all taken the prudent step of stockpiling these medications, but the US lags behind. We have only enough flu medicine to treat less than 2 percent of the American public.

This bill addresses many of the weaknesses we suffer in preparedness. It requires the Secretary of HHS to take immediate action to finalize the national preparedness plan, to stockpile enough antiviral medications for 50% of the population, and to expand capacity for vaccine production. The bill also expands global surveillance and international cooperation, so that we can rapidly detect and rapidly contain the spread of a deadly virus. It also addresses the issue of surge capacity.

Since pandemic flu is an issue of urgent national importance, our bill also creates a Director of

Pandemic Preparedness and Response in the Executive Office of the President. The Director will be responsible for coordinating the nation's efforts across the federal government and with the states. The Director will also be in charge of making sure the American public receives accurate, up-to-date information before, during and after a pandemic.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on this critical issue, and I commend Senator Reid for his leadership on this important proposal.

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Pandemic Preparedness and Response Act of 2005 Senators Reid, Obama, Bayh, Kennedy

Public health experts have warned that an avian influenza outbreak could ignite a worldwide pandemic that would threaten the lives of millions of Americans. The consequences of a pandemic could be far reaching – impacting virtually every sector of our society and our economy. Top Administration officials have admitted that our nation is dangerously unprepared for the serious threat of avian influenza. Action is urgently needed to protect the nation from the threat of pandemic flu. That is why Senate Democrats are introducing the **Pandemic Preparedness and Response Act of 2005**.

The bill will:

□□□□ **Prepare for a pandemic by finalizing, implementing, and funding pandemic preparedness and response plans.** We need a detailed plan outlining a coordinated national strategy to address a flu pandemic. The Pandemic Influenza Response and Preparedness Plan, which the World Health Organization deems essential to proper readiness, has yet to be finalized, despite having been released in draft form over a year ago. As a result, federal and state preparations for avian flu pandemic have been needlessly delayed.

The Pandemic Preparedness and Response Act:

□□□□□ Creates a Director of Pandemic Preparedness and Response within the Executive Office of the President who will be responsible for finalizing and making operational the National Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan. The Director will coordinate the federal interagency preparation for and response to a pandemic.

□□□□□ Ensures that, among other things, the National Pandemic Plan includes a specific focus on traditionally underserved populations, including low-income, racial and ethnic minority, immigrant and uninsured populations.

□□□□□ Establishes accountability for the national preparation for and response to a pandemic.

□□□□□ Expands and coordinates State Pandemic Preparedness Activities, with emphasis on surveillance, preventive and medical care, workforce development, distribution plans for vaccines, antivirals and other treatments, communication and information networks, maintenance

of core public health functions, security, and integration with national activities and existing bioterrorism preparedness activities.

□□□□ Improve surveillance and international partnerships so we may monitor the spread of avian influenza and detect the emergence of a flu strain with pandemic potential immediately. It will take several months to develop an effective vaccine against the avian flu once we have been able to identify the particular flu strain with pandemic potential. One of our best opportunities to limit the scope and consequences of any outbreak is to rapidly detect and contain the spread of a new strain that is capable of sustained human-to-human transmission.

The Pandemic Preparedness and Response Act:

- Provides assistance for international pre-pandemic surveillance and medical care.
- Establishes and implements a comprehensive diplomatic strategy targeted at nations in Southeast and East Asia most at risk for an epidemic of the avian influenza in order to strengthen our ability to detect, prevent and effectively respond to an outbreak of the avian flu.
- Creates an International Fund to support pre-pandemic influenza control and relief activities in countries affected by avian influenza.
- Expands domestic and international efforts by the Department of Agriculture to prevent pandemic avian influenza.
- Improves state surveillance efforts.

□□□□ Protect Americans through the development, production, and distribution of an effective vaccine. Our existing stockpile of vaccines – assuming they are effective against a future, unidentified flu strain – may protect less than one percent of all Americans. We have only one domestic flu vaccine manufacturer located in the United States. If our capacity to produce vaccines is not improved, it could take 15 months just to vaccinate our first responders, medical personnel and other high risk groups.

The Pandemic Preparedness and Response Act:

- Expands Research at the NIH on influenza vaccines and treatment.
- Establishes a mass tracking and distribution system for antiviral medications and vaccines.
- Enhances vaccine production capacity by creating a guaranteed market for seasonal flu vaccine through a federal buyback program for a portion of unsold doses.
- Improves access to vaccinations during a pandemic by enhancing annual flu vaccination coverage for uninsured and underinsured adults and children

□□ Plan ahead for a pandemic by stockpiling antivirals, vaccines, and other essential medications and supplies. Antiviral medication will be a crucial stopgap defense against a pandemic because it will take several months to develop, produce and distribute a vaccine.

Other nations have ordered enough Tamiflu, an antiviral pill, to cover between twenty and forty percent of their populations. The United States only has enough antiviral pills in its stockpile to cover 2 percent of its population. We also need to ensure that we have an adequate supply of other medications and medical supplies, such as masks and gloves, in our national stockpile.

The Pandemic Preparedness and Response Act:

- Requires procurement of antivirals to cover a minimum of 50 percent of the population

for the Strategic National Stockpile.

□□□□□ Requires procurement of a minimum level of vaccines, medications and other supplies for the Strategic National Stockpile.

□□□□□ Protects Americans from price-gouging of medications during a pandemic.

□□□□ **Strengthen our public health infrastructure.** The nation's public health infrastructure is weak, and our hospitals and health care providers lack adequate surge capacity to respond to a pandemic.

The Pandemic Preparedness and Response Act:

□□□□□ Improves surge capacity to ensure an adequate supply of health care providers and institutions to care for affected Americans in the event of a pandemic.

□□□□ **Inform Americans by increasing awareness and education about pandemic flu.** A pandemic could impact virtually every sector of our society and our economy. The medical community must be trained to distinguish between the annual flu and the avian flu so that an outbreak could be reported immediately. Businesses and the American public need to be educated about the steps they can take to prepare for and respond to an avian flu outbreak.

The Pandemic Preparedness and Response Act:

□□□□□ Expands research at the CDC for communication and behavioral strategies for the general public.

□□□□□ Ensures that public education and awareness campaigns targeted to businesses, health care providers and the American public related to pandemic preparedness are conducted.

□□□□ **Commit to protecting Americans by devoting adequate resources to pandemic preparedness.** Many programs that will dramatically reduce the consequences of a future avian flu outbreak are unfunded or massively underfunded. The Senate approved a Democratic amendment to the Department of Defense appropriations bill to begin providing the resources needed to address this threat. **The Pandemic Preparedness and Response Act** will ensure that adequate resources are available to address this looming threat.

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