

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 2, 2005

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KENNEDY: BUSH FLU PLAN INCOMPLETE

“As in so many other areas, the Bush Administration gets a grade of ‘incomplete’ for its flu plan.

After all the buildup and the long wait, the American people had a right to expect a comprehensive plan. But all the Administration released was a glossy brochure and a plan for a single agency, the Department of Health and Human Services – and even that was missing its most important element, the actual operational plans for responding to a pandemic epidemic.

The Administration has called for sweeping liability shields for drug companies, but fails to stand by American citizens injured by faulty products rushed to market. The plan will strain already stretched state budgets to the breaking point, by imposing on states the responsibility of buying essential flu medicines. And it fails to meet internationally recognized recommendations on acquiring supplies of needed flu medicines.

I remain concerned that this plan helps only 20 percent of the American population. Which 80 percent of Americans does the Administration deem undeserving of protection in a flu epidemic?

America can do better. I call on the Administration to release a complete flu plan without further delay – one that protects everyone, doesn’t break state budgets, and stands by injured patients.”

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