

Litjen Tan

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SENATORS CLINTON, ROBERTS INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS PANDEMIC AND SEASONAL **INFLUENZA**

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The following information was released by New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton:

Today, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) introduced the **Influenza Vaccine Security Act**, legislation to increase **flu vaccination** rates, improve stockpiling of critical supplies to treat and prevent pandemic **influenza**, and establish better distribution of seasonal **flu vaccine**. The bill also contains provisions that would encourage late-season **influenza vaccination**, to not only protect more Americans, but also maximize use of our national **flu vaccine** supply.

Every year, about 36,000 Americans die and another 200,000 are hospitalized due to the **flu**, even though a simple **flu** shot can prevent people from getting the **flu** Senator Clinton said. For the past few years, we have experienced, at various times, both shortages and surpluses of seasonal **flu vaccine**, leading to confusion among consumers, and making it harder to establish the habit of getting an annual **flu** shot. This legislation would help to increase **vaccination** rates and allow our government to work with manufacturers, public health departments, and providers to bring some balance to the **flu vaccine** market.

As a fellow member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, I am pleased to introduce this legislation with Senator Clinton today to strengthen our public health infrastructure and make sure our vaccine manufacturers have the tools necessary to produce and deliver vaccines for both seasonal and pandemic flu. Without these resources, the U.S. is extremely vulnerable in the event of a future vaccine shortage or a large-scale avian flu outbreak. Our bill will ensure an adequate and timely vaccine supply, and will make sure we are prepared at all levels a" federal, state and local a" to respond to a vaccine shortage or pandemic flu said Senator Roberts.

Since 2000, our nation has faced multiple shortages in flu vaccine for priority populations a" older Americans, children, and others at high risk of experiencing complications from the flu a" prior to Thanksgiving, which has traditionally been viewed as the start of the flu season. At the same time, millions of flu shots go unused every year. Demand for vaccination drops following Thanksgiving, even though vaccinations delivered later than that time are also effective in protecting patients during flu season, which typically peaks from December to March and can extend into May.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there have been low levels of flu activity during this flu season, and more than 100 million doses of flu vaccine will be available this year. Without increases in late season vaccination rates, millions of doses of flu vaccine will be thrown away at the end of this season. The Influenza Vaccine Security Act will provide educational grants to increase late season vaccination rates, particularly among populations with historically low vaccination rates, and establish buyback provisions to ensure that flu vaccine is not wasted at the end of a season, but is directed to activities to promote public health and bioterrorism preparedness.

In addition to the late season vaccination provisions, this legislation would require the U.S. government to stockpile critically needed vaccines, medications, and masks as part of our pandemic influenza preparation. It would establish a vaccine tracking system to improve our ability to identify shortages and redistribute vaccine to areas in need. And it would expand the capability of public health departments and providers to report flu outbreaks.

The Influenza Vaccine Security Act is supported by Trust for America' Health, the American Lung Association, the American Public Health Association, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the American Academy of Pediatrics, Service Employees International Union, and multiple other organizations.

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