

PREVENTION OF DISABILITIES THROUGH IMMUNIZATIONS

Vaccines represent one of the most significant public health advances in history. They have prevented millions of disabilities. Vaccines are now available for preventing once common childhood diseases responsible for high rates of sicknesses. Vaccines reduce future medical costs and prevent the need for more expensive drugs. They benefit the community by reducing chances of exposure to disease. Abstracts of legislation of the 109th Congress related to immunizations follows.

HR 277 Comprehensive Insurance Coverage of Childhood Immunization:

Purpose:

Require group and individual health insurance coverage to provide comprehensive coverage for childhood immunizations

Action:

- A group health plan shall provide for comprehensive coverage of routine immunizations for individuals who are dependents of a beneficiary under age 19
- Comprehensive coverage is without deductibles, coinsurance or cost sharing for immunizations
- There should be coordination of policies related to enforcement .

HR 803: Meningococcal Vaccination Act

Purpose:

Require entering students for on-campus housing post secondary institutions to receive meningococcal vaccinations

Action

- An individual enrolled in a postsecondary institution living on campus student housing shall obtain a meningococcal vaccination

HR 650: The Vaccine Accessibility for Children and Seniors Act (VACS) Act

Purpose:

Facilitate the manufacture of vital, lifesaving vaccines

Establish reasonable legal reforms based on scientific evidence that will facilitate manufacture of vaccines

Findings of Fact

- In 1967, there were 26 companies in the U.S. making vital vaccines. Today only 4 companies make the vast majority of vaccines used in the U.S.
- There was, in 1986, a no-fault compensation legislation that lowered the legal risk for vaccine manufacturers
- In October 2004, a flu vaccine shortage was announced in the U.S.

S.226: Improved Vaccine Supply Act

Purpose:

Improve immunization rates by increasing the supply of vaccines

Action:

- Develop a plan for the purchase , storage and rotation of supply of vaccines sufficient to provide routinely recommended vaccination for a 6 month period
- Include all vaccines routinely recommended for children by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices

HR 514: Armed Forces Voluntary Immunization and Health Justice Act

Purpose:

Prohibit members of the Armed Forces to receive smallpox immunizations without their consent

Provisions;

- Service members must consent to the requirement for smallpox and anthrax immunizations
- There is to be an assessment of current threat of an anthrax attack or small pox attack on members of the Armed Forces
- There should be an ongoing assessment of adverse health effects being reported by members and former members of the Armed Forces with respect smallpox and anthrax vaccines
- A National Center for Military Deployment Health Research should be established

S.375: The Flu Protection Act of 2005

Purpose:

Provide for an influenza vaccine awareness campaign

Conduct a public awareness campaign, education and outreach effort each year

Contents of the awareness program

- Populations recommended to receive the influenza vaccines
- Professional organizations involved with implementation of the program
- Information that emphasizes the safety and benefit of recommended vaccines for the public good.

Activities:

- Provide outreach to Medicare recipients
- Provide incentives for the construction of vaccine manufacturing facilities with a facilities investment credit
- Enter into contracts with manufacturers to produce additional doses of influenza vaccine to be compensated by government at an equitable rate
- Improve upon current influenza vaccines production and dissemination methods
- Coordinate preparation and prevention protocols for national surveillance capacity
- Engage in epidemiological studies and research of novel influenza viruses

HR 628: The Flu Protection Act of 2005

Purpose

Encourage vaccine production

Activities:

- The CDC shall conduct a public awareness campaign, education and outreach efforts each year during the time period preceding the influenza season

HR 881 Mercury-Free Vaccine Act

Purpose:

Reduce human exposure to mercury through vaccines

Findings of Fact:

- Thimerosal-containing vaccines should be removed from the market
- The public concern about the use of mercury in vaccines is high
- The Institute of Medicine concluded that significant reasons exist for public health attention about thimerosal exposure and neurodevelopmental disorders from vaccines administered to children and pregnant women
- Considerable progress has been made in reducing mercury exposures from childhood vaccines but still remains in several nonroutinely vaccines

- The Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that as many as 1 in 6 infants are born with blood mercury levels that exceeds the Agency's safety threshold.
- Cumulative exposures to mercury, a neurotoxin, is known to cause harm in young children and pregnant women
- Taking steps to reduce mercury exposures through vaccines is an important way to reduce direct exposure to mercury and mercury compounds.

Actions

- There shall be restriction on administration of vaccines to children under 3 years old and pregnant women that contain thimerosal
- Vaccine information materials should be disseminated indicating the presence of mercury, mercury reduced alternative vaccine and recommendations against administration of mercury-containing vaccine to a pregnant woman