



JUNE 29, 2016

ROUNDTABLE: PREPARING FOR AND PROTECTING THE NATION FROM ZIKA

UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY & GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

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MEMBER STATEMENTS

Chairman Ron Johnson (R-WI) [\[view pdf\]](#)

Senator Thomas R. Carper (D-DE) [\[view pdf\]](#)

WITNESSES

Rear Admiral Anne Schuchat, M.D., USPHS
Principal Deputy Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

H. Fisk Johnson
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
S.C. Johnson & Son

Colonel Christopher Zahn, M.D., USAF (Ret.)
Vice President, Practice Activities
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

T. Wayne Gale
Vice President, Florida Mosquito Control Association
and President-elect, American Mosquito Control Association

David O'Connor, Ph.D.
Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
University of Wisconsin-Madison

AVAILABLE WEBCAST(S):*

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**Chairman Johnson Opening Statement
“Preparing for and Protecting the Nation from Zika”**

Wednesday, June 29, 2016

As submitted for the record:

The purpose of this roundtable is to examine the Zika outbreak and the threat this virus poses to our nation’s health and security.

This threat is real. As of June 22, there were 820 cases of Zika in the continental United States.

Nearly all were contracted during travel outside the U.S. In my home state of Wisconsin, there are six confirmed Zika cases related to travel. Puerto Rico has confirmed over 1,800 locally acquired Zika cases, with predictions that roughly 20 percent of Puerto Rico’s 3.5 million inhabitants will contract the virus this year. Eight women across the United States and its territories have had adverse pregnancy outcomes related to Zika.

Since the start of the epidemic in Brazil, more than 1,500 babies have been born with Zika-associated microcephaly or nervous system malformation. And yet 80 percent of people with Zika exhibit no symptoms.

These facts highlight the significant public health threat that Zika poses and the potential for devastating consequences to pregnant women and unborn babies.

As we head into peak mosquito season across most of the United States, there is still much we do not know about the virus. It is critically important to the health and well-being of this nation to obtain answers to some key questions:

First, what exactly is the Zika virus? How is it spread? What are the symptoms? And, for those who are exposed to the virus, what are the effects?

Second, where are the mosquitos that carry this virus active today and what should Americans planning to travel to Brazil for the Olympics or other affected areas be aware of?

Finally, perhaps the most important question: how can we — as individuals, as communities, and as a nation — protect ourselves and our families?

This roundtable is especially timely given the ongoing discussion on federal funding to fight the spread of Zika.

Zika is clearly a public health priority that must be addressed. I thank all of you for being here today and I look forward to our discussion.

Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper
“Preparing for and Protecting the Nation from Zika”

Wednesday, June 29, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this roundtable today to discuss current efforts to combat the Zika virus. With the official start of summer last week, we are now in the midst of mosquito season in most parts of the United States. Unfortunately, at a time when families should be welcoming the warmer weather and traditional outdoor activities, according to media reports many are instead finding themselves having to reconsider vacations—or even whether to enjoy the great outdoors or start a family—in light of this threat.

As we all know by now, the virus has spread explosively throughout Central and South America and the Caribbean. It has already reached Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories, infecting more than 1,800 people in Puerto Rico to date. Meanwhile, more than 800 travel-related Zika cases have already been diagnosed within the continental United States, including more than 250 pregnant women. My own home state of Delaware has reported five cases of Zika so far. With the confirmation that Zika is a cause of several severe birth defects, this virus is particularly frightening to those looking to start—or grow—a family.

As the mosquito primarily responsible for transmitting the virus can be found in many states, and will be present in large numbers well into the fall, we must be prepared for the possibility of major Zika outbreaks here at home. It’s been encouraging, then, to see a proactive, coordinated response from federal, state, local, and private sector partners. Just like with our response to Ebola, our response to Zika must be an all-hands-on-deck effort.

As we will discuss today, there are significant mosquito control efforts underway across the country. Officials are also working to develop and distribute the necessary equipment to test people for the virus. Resources are also being put toward vaccine development. Just last week, one potential Zika vaccine was approved for initial safety testing – a promising sign. Efforts to educate the public about the virus and strategies to prevent infection—such as the use of mosquito repellent—are just as important.

Going forward, we must act swiftly to ensure that we have the tools needed to protect us from Zika. However, such aid should not come at the expense of ongoing efforts to contain other dangerous diseases such as Ebola and avian influenza. And, I believe it would be a mistake to pilfer the Affordable Care Act to combat this public health emergency. Congress and the Obama administration, along with state and local governments have a responsibility to the American people to work together to fully combat the health risks posed by Zika. I look forward to working with my colleagues on a responsible, bipartisan solution that combats the Zika virus without creating other health and funding crises down the road.

With that, I thank the participants here with us today and look forward to a constructive discussion about what steps we can take to prepare for, prevent and respond to Zika.