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Biodefense Panel responds with concern over Zika virus budget request

WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 10, 2016) – The Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense has released the following statement in response to the President’s $1.8 billion emergency supplemental request for Zika virus response:

“The President has issued a $1.8 billion emergency supplemental request to fight Zika virus at home and abroad. We are pleased to see this aggressive response to Zika, but believe we cannot continue to govern on an emergency basis every time a new disease arises,” said Senator Joe Lieberman, co-chair of the Panel.

Governor Tom Ridge, also co-chair, stated, “We must address the root causes underlying the frequent emergence of infections like Zika, and we must also build preparedness for them into existing budgets. Governing by the billions on an emergency basis for the now predictable problem of emerging infections is tactically inefficient, financially untenable, and potentially costly in human lives.”

The Panel’s October 2015 report found that a lack of biodefense innovation in many areas, including biosurveillance and medical countermeasure development, and an inefficiency in the governance of the national biodefense enterprise, make the United States vulnerable to a bioterrorist attack or infectious disease outbreak.

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About the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense