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**BLUE RIBBON STUDY PANEL ON BIODEFENSE RECEIVES \$1.3 MILLION GRANT TO ADVANCE LEADERSHIP ROLE ON CRITICAL ISSUES OF NATIONAL SECURITY**

*Open Philanthropy grant comes on 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of deadly anthrax attacks; stark reminder of the need for a comprehensive approach to biological events*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Sept. 21, 2016) – As the nation recalls the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the deadly anthrax attacks that targeted the U.S. Senate and various media outlets, the [Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense](#) announced today it has received a \$1.3 million grant from the Open Philanthropy Project. The grant will allow the Study Panel to continue its leadership role in assessing our nation’s biodefense systems, issuing recommendations and advocating for their implementation, and informing policymakers and lawmakers on viable avenues for needed change.

“The deadly anthrax attacks took place just days after my arrival in Washington to head up Homeland Security in the wake of 9/11,” said Gov. Tom Ridge, the first U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security and co-chair of the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense. “Fifteen years later, it is troubling that we still do not have a comprehensive approach to preparing for and responding to biological events. That is why this grant from Open Philanthropy is so critical. It will allow us to push forward the recommendations detailed in our National Blueprint and seek to put them into action.”

The Open Philanthropy Project identifies outstanding giving opportunities, makes grants, follows the results, and publishes its findings. Its mission is to give as effectively as it can and share the findings openly so that anyone can build on them.

“Biological threats are among the most important risks to our safety and security,” said Jaime Yassif, Program Officer for Biosecurity and Pandemic Preparedness at the Open Philanthropy Project. “Strengthening US biodefense capacity is a critical issue that requires sustained attention by Congress and the Executive Branch. We are delighted to support the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense and the leadership role they are taking in this area.”

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While much good work has been achieved toward biodefense, there remains a systemic failure in the enterprise designed to protect Americans from biological events. The Panel has identified weaknesses and recommended 33 steps the government can take to shore up the national biodefense posture in its report, [A National Blueprint for Biodefense: Leadership and Major Reform Needed to Optimize Efforts](#). The report assesses ongoing efforts; articulates actions to improve the nation's biodefense capabilities to prevent, deter, prepare for, detect, respond to, attribute, recover from, and mitigate biological incidents; and identifies near and long-term actions by current and future Congresses and Presidential Administrations.

“On behalf of the staff and Panel members, I would like to thank Open Philanthropy for their vision to recognize that critical investments are needed to close the gaps that still exist 15 years after 9/11 and the anthrax attacks that sent shock waves inside the Washington beltway and across the country,” said co-chair, Senator Joseph Lieberman.

Sen. Lieberman noted that progress has been made since the Panel presented its findings last fall. Before Congress recessed, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs passed Chairman Ron Johnson's National Biodefense Strategy Act of 2016. The bill, the product of a major recommendation by the Panel, now awaits action by the full Senate.

Additionally, Senator Joni Ernst successfully attached that bill to the Senate's National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017. The House has comparable language in its own defense authorization bill. Sen. Lieberman said it is incumbent on the two chambers to conference and send a defense authorization bill, complete with a National Biodefense Strategy provision, to the President.

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The [Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense](#) released its report, *A National Blueprint for Biodefense: Leadership and Major Reform Needed to Optimize Efforts*, in October 2015. The report identifies capability gaps and recommends changes to U.S. policy and law to strengthen national biodefense while optimizing resource investments. The panel is co-chaired by former Sen. Joe Lieberman and former Gov. Tom Ridge, who are joined by former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, former Sen. Tom Daschle, former Rep. Jim Greenwood, and the Hon. Kenneth Wainstein. [Hudson Institute](#), the [Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies](#), and the [Potomac Institute for Policy Studies](#) are the Panel's institutional sponsors.