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Biodefense Panel Experts Express Mixed Support for Proposed Budget

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 24) -- Today, the co-chairs of the [Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense](#) responded to the proposed FY2016 budget from the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies.

The Panel commended the Subcommittee's support of the National Institutes of Health and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Strategic National Stockpile, but has serious concerns over the considerable lack of budgetary support for the BioShield procurement fund for medical countermeasures.

The BioShield Special Reserve Fund -- which provides money to develop and purchase vaccines to be used in the event of a biological attack -- is level funded at \$255 million. From FY2004-FY2013, this fund was advance-appropriated \$5.6B in an unprecedented, bipartisan commitment to biodefense that brought a dozen countermeasures into the national stockpile.

"The President has requested \$646 million for the Special Research Fund. We are at a loss to understand why, with Ebola lingering in Africa, a MERS outbreak in East Asia, and the President's request, Congress failed to allocate more to this crucial fund." said Governor Tom Ridge, Co-Chair of the Panel.

Increases for the NIH and CDC are encouraging. They are difficult, however, to reconcile with the cut to the procurement fund request, which is what would actually be used to purchase any MCMs that the NIH developed, and that the CDC would want to stockpile. Biodefense and emerging infectious disease are an enterprise, and all facets of the enterprise must be coordinated and supported.

The Panel will issue its report this fall with funding and reform recommendations. "We hope that the final bill that goes to the President takes our recommendations into account," said Senator Lieberman, Panel Co-Chair. "Ebola proved that we weren't ready. We have to be ready next time."

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About the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense

The [Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense](#) will identify and recommend changes to U.S. policy and law to strengthen national biodefense while optimizing resource

investments. The Panel will produce a report that will: (1) assess ongoing efforts; (2) articulate actions to improve the Nation's ability to prevent, deter, prepare for, detect, respond to, attribute, recover from, and mitigate biological and large-scale chemical incidents; and (3) identify near and long-term actions by current and future Congresses and Presidential Administrations. The Report of the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense will be issued in Fall 2015.

The panel is co-chaired by former Sen. Joe Lieberman and former Gov. Tom Ridge. Other members include former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, former Majority Leader Tom Daschle, former Rep. Jim Greenwood, and the Hon. Kenneth Wainstein. [Hudson Institute](#) is the institutional sponsor of the Panel, along with the [Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies](#).