

107TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1561

To strengthen the preparedness of health care providers within the Department of Veterans Affairs and community hospitals to respond to bioterrorism.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 17, 2001

Mr. AKAKA (for himself and Mr. ROCKEFELLER) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To strengthen the preparedness of health care providers within the Department of Veterans Affairs and community hospitals to respond to bioterrorism.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress makes the following findings:

5 (1) To date, most Federal resources allocated to
6 respond to weapons of mass destruction attacks have
7 focused on traditional first-line responders (such as
8 fire fighters, emergency medical services, and police)

1 through the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Domestic Pre-
2 paredness Program.

3 (2) Efforts at creating a critical line of defense
4 against covert bioterrorism must involve health care
5 professionals. Training to prepare emergency med-
6 ical technicians, physicians, and nurses has been
7 hindered by a lack of economic incentives for hos-
8 pitals and clinics to arrange for formal training op-
9 portunities.

10 (3) The Veterans Health Administration of the
11 Department of Veterans Affairs currently has 173
12 hospitals with existing partnerships with community
13 hospitals and local health care providers.

14 (4) The Department of Veterans Affairs pos-
15 sesses equipment necessary for effective tele-
16 communications between headquarters, the Emer-
17 gency Management Strategic Health Care Group,
18 and local and regional Veterans Health Administra-
19 tion hospitals.

20 (5) The Department of Veterans Affairs has
21 the resources and partnerships necessary to imple-
22 ment a telemedicine and training program for both
23 staff and local health care providers in bioterrorism
24 preparedness and response.

1 (6) The Department of Veterans Affairs has al-
2 ready established a training program for the staff of
3 the National Medical Disaster System.

4 **SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

5 For the purposes of allowing the Department of Vet-
6 erans Affairs to work more effectively within its own hos-
7 pitals and with its community partners and to implement
8 training programs with local health care providers for bio-
9 terrorism preparedness, there is authorized to be appro-
10 priated \$2,000,000 for fiscal year 2002, and such sums
11 as may be necessary for each subsequent fiscal year.

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