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HELP Committee Approves Bipartisan Bill to Better Prepare U.S. for Pandemics and Bioterror Attacks

WASHINGTON—Today, Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) announced that the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee unanimously passed the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act Reauthorization (PAHPA). PAHPA is a bipartisan effort to ensure that our nation is prepared to respond to a wide range of medical and public health emergencies, whether naturally occurring or the result of a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear attack.

“This reauthorization builds on a record of bipartisan cooperation that has strengthened our ability to respond to medical and public health emergencies since 2006,” said Harkin. “While we are safer today from these threats than we were before PAHPA became law, this bill will ensure that the needs of at-risk populations, in particular individuals with disabilities, are met when preparing for public health emergencies such as pandemic flu or threats from chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear agents, whether naturally-occurring or man-made.”

Passage of PAHPA will strengthen national preparedness for and responses to medical and public health emergencies and disasters, optimize state and local all-hazards preparedness and response efforts and collaboration, enhance medical countermeasure activities, and reauthorize key medical and public health programs, including the Strategic National Stockpile and the BioShield Special Reserve Fund.

Additionally, the HELP Committee approved 183 nominations, including Wendy Spencer, to be Chief Executive Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service; Deepa Gupta, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts; Christopher Merrill, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities; Stephanie Orlando, to be a member of the National Council on Disability; Gary Blumenthal, to be a member of the National Council on Disability; and 178 nominees to the Public Health Service.

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