



Senator Feinstein Calls on CDC to
Get More Flu Vaccines for California
October 26, 2004

Washington, DC –U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today called on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to “make as many influenza vaccines available to Californians as possible.”

In a letter to CDC Director Julie Gerberding, Senator Feinstein requested the agency to speed up the availability of flu vaccines in the state, which so far has been able to obtain only a fraction of doses it had ordered before the shortage was announced.

Senator Feinstein is also urging Californians to report incidences of price gouging for flu vaccines to Attorney General Bill Lockyer, who has promised to “take enforcement action against those who exploit the supply shortage by charging unconscionable prices.”

Price gouging complaints can be filed online on the Attorney General’s website at <http://www.ag.ca.gov/consumers/mailform.htm> or by writing to the Public Inquiry Unit of the Attorney General’s Office at P.O. Box 944255, Sacramento, CA 94244-2550.

Following is the letter sent to Dr. Gerberding:

Julie Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Dr. Gerberding:

I am writing to urge you to take whatever steps are necessary to make as many influenza vaccines available to Californians as possible. As you know, California’s Department of Health Services ordered 100 percent of its 570,000 vaccine doses from Chiron Corporation. So far, nine California counties including Alameda, Contra Costa, Imperial, Merced, Mono, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz and the City of Berkeley have declared a public health emergency.

My offices in California and Washington D.C. have received hundreds of phone calls and letters from California constituents and physicians concerned about the lack of flu vaccines and the vaccine distribution system.

The announcement that 271,000 vaccines will be made available to California's Department of Health Services is welcome news, but it represents less than half of the total number of vaccines the Department had originally ordered. It is my understanding that the U.S. government is in negotiations to secure additional flu vaccines from overseas. I urge you to do what you can to hasten the procurement of additional vaccine doses and to assist California, which still lacks half the total number of vaccines it was anticipating.

I am concerned about the fundamental problems with our domestic vaccine manufacturing capability and emergency preparedness from inadequate supply to liability and profit concerns on the part of manufacturers. In 2000 I wrote to then-CDC Director Jeffrey Koplan with similar concerns, specifically urging the CDC to investigate the distribution system for the flu vaccine. It appears that problems continue to persist with our vaccine infrastructure and I would like to work with you when Congress is back in session to address these problems. I am very interested in any specific suggestions you might have on legislation to address our domestic vaccine supply now and in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I look forward to working with you on this issue and await your response.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

###