



ROD BLAGOJEVICH
GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS



BILL RICHARDSON
GOVERNOR OF NEW MEXICO

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New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson Joins Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich to Secure Flu Vaccine from Europe for Their Highest Risk Residents

New Mexico to purchase 150,000 doses

CHICAGO/SANTA FE -Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico today joined forces with Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich in securing hundreds of thousands of doses of flu vaccine from Europe to protect elderly, young and sick residents in their states. New Mexico has purchased 150,000 doses of vaccine out of Illinois' total shipment of 300,000 doses. The vaccine secured by the Governors is packaged and ready to be shipped within hours upon approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

“This innovative partnership will allow us to give flu shots to the majority of our most vulnerable citizens, and I urge the FDA to move quickly to approve this supply of vaccine,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “At the same time, I believe the federal government must take action to ensure adequate supplies of flu vaccine for the United States in the future. There must be a contingency plan so states don’t have to scramble for limited vaccine and leave many citizens unprotected.”

“The FDA told us that they are committed to working with Illinois to evaluate the flu vaccine we’ve secured so people who need it most can get it as soon as possible. Now their deliberations will impact residents in two other states as well,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “We have answered all of the FDA’s questions and are eagerly awaiting their approval. If the French-made Aventis vaccine is approved quickly - almost 400,000 of the most vulnerable residents of Illinois and New Mexico will get the important flu shot they need to avoid what could be a serious, even deadly, battle with the virus.”

More than a week ago, Gov. Blagojevich asked the Food and Drug Administration for quick approval to ship nearly 300,000 doses of flu vaccine from Europe to use for Illinoisans at critical risk. The vaccine secured by both states is made in Lyon, France by Aventis Pasteur - the same company that makes the only flu vaccine currently being used in the United States.

Last Friday, Gov. Blagojevich's representatives met with FDA officials to provide information about the labeling, movement and storage of the French-made Aventis Pasteur vaccine, and the state's plans for distributing the vaccine to its highest risk populations. Illinois' representatives also provided information about the licensed British wholesaler, Ecosse, that has facilitated the vaccine purchases for all three states.

New Mexico was the first state to issue a public health order that directed its agencies and providers to identify the existing supply of vaccine and ensure those most vulnerable receive them. 500,000 New Mexico adults have been identified as high risk- the State Department of Health has a commitment from the CDC to provide the remaining 350,000 doses remaining after the purchase of the 150,000 shots with Illinois.

The United States is facing a severe flu vaccine shortage as a result of problems found with doses produced by Chiron Corp., a manufacturer that was expected to produce nearly half of the 100 million doses needed for U.S. residents. Now the FDA is looking for alternative supplies to help supplement the 55 million doses of vaccine manufactured by its other supplier - Aventis Pasteur. The agency recently announced that it is investigating the safety of nearly 5 million doses of vaccine made by two different companies in Germany and Canada that could be ready in December.