



## **New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson Challenges Federal Government's Handling of Flu Vaccine Shortage- Urges Secretary of Health to Order Release of Vaccine Stockpile**

**Governor also criticizes HHS and CDC for non-communication,  
bypassing state health agencies**

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SANTA FE, NM- Governor Bill Richardson today sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson expressing serious concerns about the way the agency is handling the critical shortage of flu vaccine. The Governor also criticized HHS and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for a lack of communication with state health agencies and for making unilateral decisions affecting states without consultation.

Here is the text of Governor Richardson's letter to Secretary Thompson:

The Honorable Tommy Thompson  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Washington, D.C., 20001

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am concerned about the current influenza vaccine shortage and recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) actions to bypass state health agencies in decision-making. It is unacceptable for CDC to unilaterally make decisions that affect

New Mexico residents. CDC and Aventis-Pasteur should release the vaccine directly to the states so they may allocate these vaccines to those at highest risk.

Secondly, I ask that you reconsider plans to stockpile 4 million doses of children's vaccine. It is hasty for the federal government to set aside flu vaccine in the Strategic National Stockpile for a future emergency while we have a serious shortage of vaccine for the current flu season.

Further, I strongly encourage you to instruct the Food and Drug Administration to create mechanisms to obtain safe and available vaccines from other countries.

Three weeks after the announcement of the vaccine shortage, CDC has only now begun to systematically collect any information from state health agencies on the needs of their residents. As of today, New Mexico has not received any detailed information about the number of doses that will be made available to long-term care facilities, providers, and nursing homes. By failing to involve states, CDC undermines our partnerships, public health system, and more importantly our efforts to protect the health of citizens in urban, rural, and border communities.

Despite a lack of coherent information coming from CDC, the New Mexico Department of Health has been proactive and is working with all healthcare providers to ensure that those most in need receive the vaccine. Without transparent information about where CDC is sending vaccine, our efforts are significantly hampered.

I urge the CDC to release as much influenza vaccine as possible, and defer any contributions to the Strategic National Stockpile until more vaccine becomes available from Aventis-Pasteur later in the flu season. It is critical that federal, state and local governments work together to quickly address this public health issue. I know that you, as a former Governor, understand my concerns and efforts to promote and protect the health of the residents in my state.

My administration is committed to working with HHS on distributing flu vaccine to our residents. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Secretary of Health Michelle Lujan Grisham at (505) 827-2613.

Sincerely,

Bill Richardson  
Governor

CC: New Mexico Congressional Delegation