

Weldon/Maloney Bill Eliminates Mercury
Exposure for Children and Developing Fetuses
Legislation Would Ban Mercury from Vaccines

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Reps. Dave Weldon, M.D. (R-FL) and Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), introduced legislation to eliminate mercury from vaccines. Given the increasing concerns about mercury exposures and our ability to eliminate this particular exposure, this bill completes actions begun five years ago to ban mercury from vaccines.

"[The] Public Health Service, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and vaccine manufacturers agree that thimerosal-containing vaccines should be removed as soon as possible," stated the proclamation issued in July 1999. Yet five years later thimerosal - 50% mercury - remains in some non-routine childhood vaccines. The government is poised to recommend the flu vaccine later this year without recommending that infants and pregnant women get the mercury-free version of the inoculation.

"This legislation is necessary to ensure that we don't roll back the clock when it comes to eliminating this mercury exposure to developing fetuses and infants," said Rep. Weldon, a physician. "We can eliminate this exposure now and it is inexcusable not to."

"It's a simple concept: kids shouldn't be given anything that's toxic," said Maloney. "Who would argue against that? Vaccines can be made without mercury, so why not remove the mercury and remove any doubt?"

Mercury is a neurotoxin and is particularly harmful to the developing central nervous system of fetuses and infants. In January the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a report finding that 1-in-6 infants is born with a blood mercury level above the level considered safe by the EPA. Furthermore, the Food and Drug Administration and the EPA recently warned that pregnant women and young children limit their consumption of certain fish in order to reduce mercury exposures.

H.R. 4169:

- Requires that by Jan 1, 2005, no childhood vaccine have more than 1 microgram (mcg) of mercury;
- Requires that the flu vaccine administered to children, beginning later this year with the 2004/05 flu season, have no more than 1 mcg of mercury;
- Requires that by Jan 1, 2006, mercury be removed completely from all childhood and adolescent vaccines; and
- Requires that for all adult vaccines - no vaccine may contain more than 1 mcg of mercury after January 1, 2007;
- Expresses the Sense of the Congress that the CDC should incorporate into its vaccine promotion messages, a recommendation against administering a mercury-containing vaccine to pregnant women.