

over 10 years ago we set up the architecture to be able to be ahead of things like Zika and Ebola. Quite frankly, during different administrations under different control, we failed to fund the things that we recognized we needed to do.

As we have this crisis and we respond to it, let's also reassure the American people that we are going to invest in that architecture and that we will be ahead of novel diseases. I call it novel. We have known about Zika for over 40 years, and the fact is that technology now allows us to address this in a different way. Let's invest in those platform technologies. Let's make sure we have an architecture that allows advanced development for the vaccines or the countermeasures. Let's not let down the American people on the next disease or the next threat that we might face.

I thank the Presiding Officer and the chairman.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:42 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2:30 p.m. will be equally divided between the managers or their designees.

The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, at this point I wish to yield to Senator REED of Rhode Island, the subcommittee ranking member and the comanager of this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, let me thank the chairman for her consideration. I rise in support of the Zika supplemental amendment offered by Senators MURRAY and BLUNT, as well as the amendment offered by Senator NELSON.

The threat of the Zika virus is a serious public health issue and Congress must act to help minimize the spread before we have an epidemic on our hands. It has been over 2 months since the Administration asked for emergency funds for a comprehensive response to the Zika virus and to speed up development of a vaccine. This should not be a partisan issue, and inaction leaves us more susceptible to this serious public health emergency. This disease is spreading rapidly in other countries, and as we saw last year with Ebola—and with other mosquito-borne illnesses—we are living in an interconnected world and we are not immune to the spread of these diseases.

Already, there are over 1,000 cases of Zika virus in the United States and U.S. territories, including over 100 pregnant women. We have only seen two cases so far in my home State of Rhode Island, but the virus is spreading and it isn't going away on its own. We will certainly see these numbers increase as we approach the summer months.

I had the opportunity to host a discussion in Rhode Island about this topic just a few weeks ago, bringing together Federal officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, as well as public health officials from the Rhode Island Department of Health, among other experts in the State. Everyone agreed that funding is needed immediately to ensure that we are prepared for Zika.

State and local public health departments will be critical to strengthening efforts to prevent and diagnose cases of Zika, among other mosquito-borne illnesses this summer. While transmission of mosquito-borne illnesses has been limited in the United States so far, it is critical that state and local public health departments have the resources they need—in addition to ongoing communication with the CDC—so they have the most up-to-date information on diagnostics and testing for mosquito-borne illnesses.

The NIH also needs more resources to help fast-track research and development of a vaccine for the Zika virus. The Zika virus has the potential to circulate in the United States over the long term, and we need to be prepared for the fact that we will be combating this disease for more than just a few months in the summer.

We also need more research on the virus. The Zika virus has been around for decades, and there have been outbreaks in other parts of the world, but we didn't know it could cause a birth defect called microcephaly that impacts brain development until this year. We still don't know the long-term impacts on these children and their mothers.

I plan to support Senator NELSON's amendment to fully fund the administration's Zika supplemental request. I appreciate his efforts to push this issue and to help ensure that we have robust funding to help combat the threat of Zika.

While Senator NELSON's approach is preferable, I also plan to support the amendment of Senator MURRAY and Senator BLUNT to provide \$1.1 billion in funding to address Zika. This amendment is a bipartisan compromise, and my hope is that no less than this funding level will move forward and be signed into law before we head into the summer months.

It is so critical that we move quickly on this so our state and local health departments will have the resources they need to deal with the potential growing cases in the coming months.

Senators MURRAY and BLUNT have been working for weeks on this amendment, and I want to thank them for their commitment to get to this agreement.

I will oppose Senator CORNYN's amendment, which would make harmful cuts to the Prevention and Public Health Fund. This is a classic case of robbing Peter to pay for Paul. The Prevention and Public Health Fund makes exactly the kinds of investments in our public health infrastructure that better prepare us to deal with emergencies like Zika or Ebola.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund also helps fund disease prevention programs such as cancer screenings and immunization programs that save us money in the long run. Instead of cutting the Prevention and Public Health Fund to pay for the Zika supplemental, we should actually be investing more into these programs. So it is my hope we will reject this approach and instead pass emergency legislation today to deal with the Zika virus.

The funding that will be made available as a result of today's votes will be critical in the efforts to prevent outbreaks of the disease in the United States and hopefully the creation of a vaccine in the near future.

There is still a lot we don't know about the Zika virus—and once we pass this emergency funding package, Congress will still need to work together to continue evaluating needs and determining whether more resources are necessary.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to protect Americans from the potentially devastating impacts of the Zika virus.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, shortly the Senate will proceed to consider three alternative proposals to provide much needed funding to combat the Zika virus. I am deeply concerned about the rapidly emerging and evolving Zika virus, which poses a particular threat to pregnant women and can cause serious birth defects.

To learn more about this virus and other public health challenges, I recently toured the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA, with my friend and colleague Senator ISAKSON. I was deeply impressed by the team of extraordinarily dedicated public servants who work there. These scientists leverage an enormous range of knowledge to protect the American people, including through rapid response to infectious disease threats.

CDC's experts told me they call the mosquito that carries the Zika virus the cockroach of the mosquito world because it is so difficult to get rid of. This mosquito can breed in water that fits within the size of a bottle cap. It is commonly found in the United States in areas like Florida and our gulf coast.

There are now more than 1,000 cases of Zika virus in the United States and