

Letter Sent to the House and Senate FY 2002 Defense Appropriations Conferees

December 13, 2001

The Honorable Christopher S. (Kit) Bond
United States Senate
274 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bond:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine (ACP-ASIM), I want to thank you for your commitment to provide funding to protect Americans against the threat of bioterrorism. ACP-ASIM is the nation's largest medical specialty society, representing 115,000 physicians and medical students who specialize in internal medicine.

The College is extremely concerned about the threat of a biological or chemical attack to public health, and how unprepared physicians, nurses, and the rest of the medical community are. Adequate funding for nation's public health to respond to the serious threat of a biological or chemical weapon attack is critical. Neither the physician community nor the public health infrastructure has been adequately trained or equipped to meet this challenge we now face.

Therefore, as you consider in conference committee H.R. 3338, the FY 2002 Defense Appropriations Act, ACP-ASIM strongly believes it is important that you include adequate levels of funding for the following crucial areas:

- Strengthen capacity improvements for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and enhance communications networks for local and state public health infrastructure;
- Improve the training and education of health care professionals at the state and local levels;
- Enhance hospital preparedness by providing the necessary training, equipment, medicine, and surge capacity to handle mass casualties;
- Expansion of the national pharmaceutical stockpile and secure sufficient supply of smallpox vaccines; and
- Protection of our nation's food supply through increased inspection and surveillance tools.

We believe that funding for these initiatives is essential in order to respond to a biological or chemical attack.

The level of federal commitment to respond to this kind of threat must be one that will last for many years to come. ACP-ASIM sincerely appreciates your efforts to provide the much-needed funding to address these gaps in our nation's public health infrastructure. We thank you for your outstanding leadership in keeping America safe from a bioterrorist attack, and for considering our views.

Sincerely,

William J. Hall, MD, FACP
President