

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC

Burr And Kennedy Introduce Bill To Improve  
Health Security Measures  
*Bill Improves Regulations for Potential Bioterrorism Agents*

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), along with U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), introduced the *Select Agent Program and Biosafety Improvement Act of 2008*, to reauthorize the Select Agent Program and improve our nation’s approach to biosafety and biosecurity. The Select Agent Program regulates the possession, use, and transfer of biological substances that pose a severe threat to public or animal health. Authorization for the program expired in September of 2007.

“We must remain vigilant in our efforts to protect the American people from bioterrorism,” Burr said. “The Select Agent Program is an important part of ensuring the nation’s safety and security and I look forward to working with my colleagues to reauthorize and improve the program.”

"This legislation is part of Senator Kennedy's ongoing work to see that full potential of the nation's researchers can be directed toward protecting the health of American families from the new disease threats of the twenty-first century," said a spokesperson for Senator Kennedy.

In addition to reauthorizing the Select Agent Program, this legislation will require the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to modernize the list of select agents by considering recent scientific advances, which make it possible to create dangerous pathogens from scratch or modify them and make them more deadly. The bill will also improve training for personnel in high containment laboratories and establish a voluntary incident reporting system to help identify protocols for safety and security improvements.

“This bill is necessary to guarantee the safety of laboratory workers and ensure that we have the most efficient and effective procedures possible for regulating dangerous biological agents,” Burr added. “In this time of exciting scientific advances, we must make sure our laws and prevention programs reflect current conditions.”

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