

U.S. House Passes Eshoo Biodefense Bill

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. House of Representatives voted unanimously Tuesday to accelerate the development of medical countermeasures against bioterrorism and pandemic health threats.

The bill, H.R. 5533, introduced by Reps. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif., and Mike Rogers, R-Mich., would create the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) within the Department of Health and Human Services.

“We’re in a race against time with terrorists and the spread of infectious diseases,” said Eshoo, a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee. “With BARDA, companies will get the support needed to develop medicines which will save lives should there be another anthrax attack, a ‘dirty bomb,’ or a virulent pandemic.”

Eshoo said BARDA will establish a single point of federal authority to coordinate the development of innovative new antidotes and vaccines against biological weapons, such as small pox, and against rapidly evolving health threats, such as Asian bird flu.

The lack of commercial demand has discouraged companies from developing such drugs and created a funding gap known as the “Valley of Death,” Eshoo said BARDA will bridge that gap by making interim payments at key development milestones, thereby encouraging companies to pursue medicines showing promise in early research.

Passing BARDA will help fulfill the mandate of Project Bioshield to bolster the supply of medical countermeasures in our Strategic National Stockpile.

The bill, known as the Biodefense and Pandemic Vaccine and Drug Development Act of 2006, would authorize \$160 million a year to fund BARDA in 2007 and 2008.

A companion bill (S. 3678) is awaiting consideration by the full Senate.

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