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Los Alamos National Laboratory is Home to Groundbreaking Disease Tracking Technology

Washington, DC - Today, Rep. Ben Ray Luján sent a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, urging her to use disease tracking programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory that can track and model the future path of the swine flu. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) maintains the National Infrastructure Simulation and Analysis Center (NISAC) at both Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories. NISAC has the capability to model the global spread of flu strains--and has done so in the past.

"Given that the current outbreak of the swine flu has now moved globally, I would strongly urge the Department to activate NISAC and begin the process of forecasting the spread of this virus," said Rep. Luján. "While we do not want to cause greater alarm, it is of great importance that our country is prepared for various contingencies."

"As a Member of Congress representing a state that shares a common border with Mexico, I believe my state health department officials would benefit greatly if there were information available to them about when they could expect the first cases of this virus to migrate across our border and how New Mexico could be best positioned to protect its population."

Although there have been no confirmed cases of the swine flu in New Mexico, residents should take steps to stay healthy. Rep. Luján's office has created a [web page](#) with important information about the swine flu and resources for New Mexico residents to learn how they can stay healthy.

For more information on Los Alamos National Laboratory's pandemic flu supercomputer modeling program, visit LANL's [web site](#) .

FULL TEXT OF LETTER

April 29, 2009

Hon. Janet Napolitano

Secretary of Homeland Security

U.S. Naval Security Station

3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20393

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

I have been closely monitoring the spread of the swine flu first as it emerged in Mexico and then as it began to spread globally. I am struck by the swift transport of this virus around the globe. As you well know, the global reach of air transportation has demonstrated how a localized viral outbreak can quickly be spread thousands of miles in a matter of days.

As federal officials disseminate information on the current infection rates and recommend precautionary steps, I am reminded of a briefing I received at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) on modeling the spread of an avian influenza pandemic and different strategies to mitigate its impacts. As I understood from the LANL discussion, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) maintains the National Infrastructure Simulation and Analysis Center (NISAC) at both Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories. NISAC has the capability to model the global spread of flu strains--and has done so in the past. I understood from them that their modeling of a global avian influenza pandemic was used by federal decision makers across the US government. Given that the current outbreak of the swine flu has now moved globally, I would strongly urge the Department to activate NISAC and begin the process of forecasting the spread of this virus. While we do not want to cause greater alarm, it is of great importance that our country is prepared for various contingencies.

As a Member of Congress representing a state that shares a common border with Mexico, I believe my state health department officials would benefit greatly if there were information available to them about when they could expect the first cases of this virus to migrate across our border and how New Mexico could be best positioned to protect its population. While there are no known cases in my state of New Mexico, the Department has done an outstanding job to this point in disseminating critical information to the public about the current status and risks associated with this outbreak, but I want to encourage bringing all of our available tools to bear on this important global health issue.

Thank you for attention to this matter and please do not hesitate to contact me directly if I can be of any assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Ben Ray Luján

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