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AUGUST 4, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF A LETTER FROM THE
PRESIDENT TO THE SPEAKER OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AND THE HONORABLE MIKE MANSFIELD

August 4, 1976

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Senator Mansfield:)

On March 24, 1976, after meeting with a distinguished group of physicians, scientists and public health experts, I asked the Congress to appropriate \$135 million dollars for the production of sufficient swine flu vaccine to inoculate every man, woman and child in the United States. I also directed the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to develop plans that would make this vaccine available to all Americans. The Congress moved quickly on my appropriation request, and I was pleased to sign it into law April 15.

Since that time HEW, working with the medical profession, State and local health officials, vaccine manufacturers, and other groups, have developed extensive plans to see to it that our original goal of making this vaccine available to all Americans can be met.

We continue to be faced, however, with a major problem in meeting our goal. Although experience indicates that there is a very low risk of untoward reactions to the vaccine, the drug manufacturers producing this vaccine for HEW need some form of appropriate liability protection.

On June 16, in anticipation of this situation, I directed HEW Secretary Mathews to immediately submit legislation to the Congress to enable the government to assume a proper share of risks so that this important program might move ahead.

This morning I received a report from the Secretary that after seven weeks of discussions and negotiations, the Health and Environment Subcommittee of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee acted last night to report legislation that would, if enacted by the House and Senate, correct this problem, which has unnecessarily delayed this vital program.

I am writing to you this afternoon to urge that the House of Representatives (Senate) move quickly to enact this legislation so that the vaccine can be made available without further delay.

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In conclusion, let me reiterate a point that I made in March and again to Chairman Paul Rogers on July 23: The threat of swine flu is genuine. Data from both the scientific and medical communities support the need for an inoculation program. Clinical tests conducted to date show that the vaccine is both safe and effective. There is no excuse now to let this program -- a program that could affect the lives of many, many Americans -- be delayed any longer. Let's work together to get on with the job.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD

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