

**Chairman Roy Blunt Opening Statement
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies**

**Conference Meeting on the Fiscal Year 2017 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs
and Zika Response Appropriations Act (HR.2577)**

June 15, 2016

(As prepared for delivery)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Zika is a public health concern that this Committee has taken very seriously. Every week there are more reported cases of the Zika virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported a total of nearly 700 travel associated cases in the continental U.S. and over 1,300 cases in U.S. Territories.

Working with my Ranking Member, Senator Murray, we have held a Zika hearing, met with officials from the National Institutes of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and passed a bipartisan Zika supplemental in the Senate to provide \$1.1 billion for Zika response activities.

Specifically, the Senate supplemental provided funding to the Department of Health and Human Services to respond to Zika in a three-pronged strategy:

- Develop vaccine candidates, therapeutics, and new diagnostic tools;
- Provide the Centers for Disease Control the funding necessary to focus response efforts, domestically and internationally, on the highest priority activities such as vector control, emergency preparedness, and public health outreach;
- And target funding to Puerto Rico, which public health experts believe will continue to be the most at risk of a serious Zika outbreak.

In addition, my colleagues on the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee included funding to support affected countries' ability to:

- Implement vector management and control programs to reduce transmission of the Zika virus;
- Support maternal and child health programs;
- And expand communication and public health outreach efforts.

This is a targeted response to provide the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of State with the funding they need.

Senator Murray and I continue to work with our House colleagues to craft a bipartisan Zika supplemental that will pass both Houses of Congress. We were able to write a bipartisan supplemental that passed the Senate with 68 votes in May. Last week, we were successful in moving the first bipartisan Labor/HHS bill out of the Committee in seven years. It is my hope that we continue to work together, resolve our differences with the House, and move a Zika supplemental forward in the next several days.

Thank you.

###