

**Senator Joe Lieberman**  
**Floor Statement: Homeland Security Budget Amendment**  
**April 3, 2003**

Mr. President, I rise in strong support of Senator Schumer's amendment, which I am proud to co-sponsor.

Mr. President, we spent much of last year here on the Senate floor talking about how to reorganize our federal government to meet and beat the challenge of terrorism. And in the end, we passed a bill creating a Department of Homeland Security that for the first time is refocusing and reorganizing the federal government to make America safer.

But we have said all along that while better organization is a necessary prerequisite to making us safer, it isn't enough. We need to put dollars where the danger is. You can't protect your house in a dangerous neighborhood with a jerry-rigged lock or no lock at all. A "Beware of Dog" sign isn't good enough. You need to spend some money. You need to buy a real lock. You need to get a decent dog.

The President often says that America has the resolve it needs to win this war against terrorism. And that's true. Americans are resolute. They are courageous. They are prepared to face down danger and do what it takes to overcome it. That's especially true of the men and women in our fire departments, police departments, emergency medical offices, and hospitals—the men and women we call first responders.

Resolve, however, will only go so far if it isn't matched by real resources. Can resolve buy interoperable communications equipment? Pay for firefighters' overtime? Install a security system at a port? Upgrade the information sharing databases in local communities? Dramatically improve public health systems to deal with biological or chemical attacks? No—all those urgent improvements and others demand more than resolve. They demand resources.

Right now, the resources are nowhere to be found. This Administration seems determined to do homeland security on the cheap—adding just \$300 million to the budget for next fiscal year for homeland security. And the reason boils down to one reason and one reason only. The Administration is committed to protecting \$2 trillion in unfair, unfocused, and ineffective tax cuts, at all costs. On this, it will not budge. It will not yield. It will not reconsider a single digit or a single dollar.

That irrational and ideological commitment to those unaffordable tax cuts has squeezed out every other priority. It's raided the national cupboard at a time when we desperately need new resources to tackle new threats.

Mr. President, America has the greatest military in the world, and that's because we have paid for it. Generation after generation, we've worked together across party lines and every other division to invest in our armed forces and the men and women who dedicate their lives to the common defense. We are truly, to recall President Kennedy, willing to pay any price and bear any burden to deter and defeat foreign threats.

There's no way around this: if we want the best domestic defenses, we'll have to pay for them, too.

#### Job One: Funding First Responders

Mr. President, at the state and local level, where fiscal crises are already forcing cuts in services, the federal government's failure to invest is especially serious.

The amendment under consideration today would begin to address the critical shortfalls facing our local communities by providing \$2.5 billion in first responder grants to states to the wartime supplemental budget, and an additional \$500 million to states for critical infrastructure protection. It includes over \$1 billion for grants to high threat urban areas. In addition to these first responder grants, the amendment provides \$155 million in grants to fire departments to fully fund the \$900 million authorized level, and an additional \$130 million to the COPS program, which will fund additional police costs.

This is the least we can provide. As you may know, I've called for a still greater investment—\$7.5 billion for our first responders above and beyond the President's proposal in next year's budget... and \$16 billion overall in that budget above and beyond the paltry \$300 million increase.

But this amendment, along with the other amendments I am proud to cosponsor that will come before the Senate today, is a good start—a necessary start. Let me give you a few examples of the urgent needs throughout America today that it would begin to address:

- New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said his city is currently spending \$5 million a week to post armed units at potential targets like Times Square, conduct bioterrorism detection, and prepare police in the five boroughs to operate as independent departments should the Manhattan headquarters be disabled in an emergency.
- According to The Washington Post in an article published April 1—and, no, unfortunately it wasn't an April Fool's joke—Los Angeles “has grown so desperate waiting for federal money that last week it reluctantly raided a municipal trust fund for \$4.5 million and bought 1,000 chemical protection suits for firefighters and police.” L.A. has also reduced staffing at its 24-hour emergency operation center in part to save money on security costs.
- According to The Baltimore Sun, the mayor's office in Baltimore estimates that the city needs to spend another \$8.4 million on new communications and hazmat equipment, protective gear, and training, not to mention another \$122 million to upgrade water treatment plants, build a new emergency operations center, and more.
- The list goes on. My own home community of New Haven, Connecticut has been able to outfit about 10 percent—just 10 percent—of its 300 firefighters with protective equipment that will be needed to respond in the event of a chemical or biological attack.

Let's face it. Meeting those needs and others will take more money from Washington, plain and simple. But some don't seem to understand that. The Majority Leader, Senator Frist, was quoted in CongressDaily as saying that, “It is unnecessary and wasteful to spend more money at the

federal level. The problem is not the federal availability of money. It's getting it down to the local level."

With all respect, that's just not the case. In fact, according to the National Governors' Association, states have already obligated or spent more than 90 percent of their federal funds. And to complicate things, many states have been spending their own money for 15 months but have yet to be reimbursed by the slow and cumbersome process through which money flows from the federal government to states and localities. This is only exacerbating budget crises at the state and local level, where many communities are actually laying off and reducing the number of first responders—so we are going backwards. The reality is that we need to get more funding to first responders, and we need to get it to them as quickly as possible.

The bottom line is this. We must get our first responders more resources and we need to do it without further delay. Enough posturing, enough politics. Let's rise above partisanship and put the national interest first.

### Biological and Chemical Attacks

Mr. President, the strain on our local first responders has put them in a fiscal straitjacket of historic proportions—one we must relieve now if we are to protect Americans from terrorism.

Nevertheless, let's be fair. Let's realize that, yes, we've made some progress in the 18 months since September 11th. Today we are better equipped to handle a second September 11th. Our skies are safer. The FBI has announced major reforms, which are in progress. I hope we're beginning to tackle the problem of intelligence coordination that plagued us in the weeks and months leading up to that dark day.

But the terrorists constantly change their methods. Next time, the threat isn't likely to come in the form of airplanes crashing into buildings. The weapon might only be visible under the microscope. And instead of arriving with a loud crash and flames, it might come quietly, secretly, surreptitiously. And just as September 11th challenged our police officers and firefighters as never before, a biological or chemical attack would challenge our public health first responders as never before.

And the reality is, if that happens, we're nowhere near ready. As resolute and resourceful as our public health professionals are, they lack the support, the capabilities, and the funding they need to detect these deadly diseases swiftly and protect us effectively. We need significant new investment today to improve our readiness tomorrow.

Look at the reaction to the recent outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS. An unknown microbial agent. A mysterious name. Those harrowing pictures of children with surgeon's masks covering their mouths and noses. The slow but consistent spread throughout Asia, and now around America. Travel warnings from the World Health Organization placing large swaths of the world off limits. This, by all accounts, is simply a serious disease with which we unfamiliar—but the profile of the outbreak is frighteningly close to what we imagined a bioterror attack might look like.

The public health officials in our local communities are well-informed and well-trained. But

working together with the CDC, they just don't have the tools to determine what is causing SARS. They don't have the tools to treat the victims. They don't have the tools to try to stop the spread of the disease in its tracks.

If SARS is 4 percent lethal, what will we do with a disease that is 80 percent lethal? What will we do with a disease that spreads faster and is harder to diagnose? Let's not cross our fingers and hope. Unfortunately, that's exactly what we are forced to do under the Administration's budget, which shortchanges investment in our local public health systems and hospitals.

As a result, our hospitals—already constrained by drastic budget cuts, are now rubbing quarters together when they need to be building substantial new capabilities to contend with the new threats. Time magazine put it this way: "Speed and calm, both critical in a state of emergency, can be taught without special gear, but training in certain techniques and life-saving equipment, like \$25,000 protective suits, don't come cheap. That means most of America's hospitals are ill-prepared to face a major disaster."

According to the Greater New York Hospital Association, hospitals throughout the state have spent more than \$200 million on security and emergency response improvements that they never imagined would be necessary before September 11th—with plans to spend more than that in the coming year. What has Washington's contribution been? About \$8 million in new funding—less than the hospitals will spend on the new smallpox vaccination program alone.

And these new demands are only further straining emergency rooms that are already stretched to the limit. Dr. Cai Glushak, director of emergency medicine at the University of Chicago, described the state of Chicago's hospitals this way. "The hospitals are vastly lacking in resources and have yet to address major things with brick and mortar to create truly adequate facilities to deal with a major contamination issue." And he went on to say of his hospital, "If we had an onslaught of 20 people in this emergency room, it would be a catastrophe. It would be sending an external disaster on top of an internal overload."

Mr. President, how can we expect our hospitals, clinics, labs and public health departments to protect us from unknown biothreats when they themselves are on the verge of being fiscally bedridden?

Now, of course money isn't all that local hospitals need from the feds. They also need information, expertise, and guidance. And they're getting some of that from the CDC. But a sustained improvement in our bioterror defense demands more than that. It demands a real investment. It demands federal leadership. And those are sorely lacking in the budget requests that we have seen from this Administration.

For the next fiscal year, I've called for \$3 billion in new homeland security funding over and above the president's proposal to shore up bioterror preparedness. \$1 billion of that increase would increase CDC grants to help state public health departments care for and track infectious disease outbreaks. \$500 million would help local hospitals increase capacity, training and supplies. And \$1.5 billion would help get new medical research as quickly as possible from "bench to bedside"—meaning, from the discovery phase into actual use.

Hand in hand with these efforts, we simply must jumpstart efforts to spark private sector

production of the drugs, antidotes, and countermeasures we need to fight unknown chemical and biological agents. Again, the SARS example is instructive here as well.

We have no antidote for this disease. No vaccine. No countermeasure. No diagnostic. It's possible that the only effective medical response will turn out to be quarantine.

Imagine a biological weapon that spreads twice as fast and is twice as deadly. Do we really want quarantine to be our only answer? No—we need real medical shields to fight back against the biological and chemical weapons our enemies might use.

And we can't simply hope and pray for these to appear. Stocking our medicine cabinet with the right drugs to protect people from SARS will take months or years of research... months or years of investment... months or years of hard work by private and government professionals.

That's why we need to begin today—not in six months, not in a year—engaging every national resource we have to develop the drugs, vaccines, and antidotes we may need in the event of a biological attack. We know of dozens upon dozens of deadly agents for which we currently have no defense, and this does not even count the hybrid or genetically modified organisms we may see in the future. And America is blessed with thousands and thousands of brilliant researchers in universities and companies across the country. Why not harness their ingenuity to develop those antidotes, those vaccines, those medicines?

Senator Hatch and I have proposed legislation that would do exactly that.

I do not believe that Project Bioshield, the limited incentive program the President has proposed, is remotely enough. At best it focuses on short-term procurement of existing countermeasures, not on long-term research to deal with the threats for which we have no countermeasure. It will not lead to development of a broad-spectrum antibiotic, or to the development of powerful new research tools that will enable us to quickly develop an anti-viral to deal with a new threat like SARS. It's a start, but it's late and it does not reflect the urgency that is warranted by the threat.

The bill Senator Hatch and I have introduced will put in place a broad range of incentives our private sector needs to start filling our medicine cabinet today—so our public health first responders are not caught empty-handed tomorrow, as they have been caught with SARS.

## Conclusion

Mr. President, we are at war against terrorism. Our first responders—whether they go to work in firehouses, police precincts, hospitals, or laboratories—are our first line of defense. Let's not frustrate and condemn to failure those whose job it is to protect us—many of whom risk their lives—by failing to provide them the resources they need to meet and beat the new and unfamiliar threats to our homeland.

The war against terrorism cannot be won with a magic wand, tough talk, or wishful thinking. It will take talent, training, and technology. It will take real, not rhetorical, partnership among every layer and level of government. It will take bipartisan action in Congress. And it will take money.

To begin providing our government the resources it needs to protect us from terrorism, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

###