

Global Network for Avian Influenza Surveillance Act

A bill to establish a domestic and global network for avian influenza surveillance among wild birds to combat the growing threat of bird flu to Americans

Section by Section

Senator Joseph Lieberman

Background

The spreading H5N1 virus, a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) strain, is a significant threat to global human health, the global poultry industry, and the global economy more generally. Tens of millions of chickens have been killed in order to curb the spread of disease. The economic losses associated with this limited human outbreak alone are estimated to be in the billions of dollars. More important than money, approximately 60 humans have died of the H5N1 virus resulting from exposure to infected chickens. This number could grow to the tens of millions if the virus mutates resulting in sustained human-to-human transmission. In the context of the growing spread of avian flu from Southeast Asia, to Eurasia, and now to the European Union, the possibility of a human pandemic increases.

Many of our current global and domestic efforts focus on human surveillance and domestic poultry and waterfowl surveillance. Future efforts outlined in proposed legislation also focus exclusively on human and domestic poultry and waterfowl surveillance. However, the vectors for spreading avian infectious diseases are wild birds that come into contact with or share water supplies with domesticated birds. The resulting contact transmits the virus from wild animals to domesticated animals and vice versa. As wild birds migrate, they can carry the virus to new locations and continue the spread. This is what happened during the 1918 influenza virus epidemic that killed 40-100 million people worldwide

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To address this gap in our preparedness efforts, Senator Lieberman is proposing \$10,000,000 annually for the CDC to partner with a wildlife organization with experience tracking disease in wild birds to establish a global network for avian influenza surveillance (GNAIS). This global network will

- Increase the efficiency with which we can detect, verify, and report on the presence of highly infectious avian influenza strains in migratory birds,

- Utilize information gained from viral strains in wild birds to track viral mutations,
- Utilize virus tracking information to guide domestic and global preparedness,
- Create an open access database identifying HPAI and other pathogens of interest identified in migratory birds with the intention to share them in as close to real time as possible

A section-by-section summary of the legislation is below.

Section 1: Short Title

Section 2: Findings

Section 3: Purpose

Section 4: Definition

Section 5: The Global Network for Avian Influenza Surveillance

- The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) acting through CDC's National Influenza Branch and in conjunction with a US non-governmental wildlife conservation organization with extensive global wildlife health experience in tracking wild bird diseases and shall establish a Global Network for Avian Influenza Surveillance (GNAIS).
- Network partners will include the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the Department of Agriculture, the US Geological Survey (USGS) and US Fish and Wild-Life Service of the Department of the Interior, various state wildlife agencies, multilateral agency partners including the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization and the World Conservation Union, and accredited colleges of veterinary medicine.
- Trained professionals will monitor and test for the presences of avian influenza and other significant pathogens around the world and in marketplaces with intense trade in wild birds.
- Samples will be processed at certified laboratories. Laboratory results will be made available to GNAIS partners and the Secretary via an electronic database
- The Secretary will use the electronic database to identify and investigate local disease outbreaks of avian influenza, develop a long-term baseline of avian flu strains that can predict where outbreak might occur and paths of dispersal, and provide findings to the CDC and other GNAIS partner to prevent or combat human disease
- The Secretary shall create a public database to provide geographic data on wild bird populations, their movement and the avian flu virus they carry
- The Secretary will train GNAIS partners