

United States Senate

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Bethany Lesser (202) 224-3978 (Brown)

Geoff Embler (202) 224-9767 (Hutchison)

Melissa Wagoner (202) 224-2633 (Kennedy)

BROWN, HUTCHISON, KENNEDY INTRODUCE NEW, COMPREHENSIVE TUBERCULOSIS LEGISLATION

Washington, DC – Unites States Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), and Ted Kennedy (D-MA) today introduced the *Comprehensive TB Elimination Act of 2007* which is designed to fight the reemergence of TB in the U.S. and help combat the disease globally.

Joining Brown at a Capital Hill news conference today were Dr. Jim Kim, FXB Professor of Health and Human Rights; Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Dr. Maria C. Freire, CEO of TB Alliance, and Dr. Alfred Munzer, Director of Critical Care and Pulmonary Medicine at Washington Adventist Hospital in Takoma Park, MD.

"XDR-TB is a serious issue for the global health community," said Sen. Brown. "Since 1997, I have been working to increase federal dollars for international anti-Tuberculosis programs, and it is essential that we address XDR-TB immediately. The consequences of coming up a day late and a dollar short could be devastating for the entire world."

"This legislation will provide the tools to aggressively eradicate the scourge of TB," Sen. Hutchison said. "I'm pleased that this bill enlists the help of the U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission, which I helped create, in finding solutions to this problem. The effects of TB are felt acutely in our cities and border communities. Bringing the commission's expertise to the table will help us eliminate TB in America and around the world."

"America is at risk from a new generation of deadly pathogens resistant to the medicines that doctors have relied on for a generation to fight them," Sen. Kennedy said. "Congress needs to take strong steps to encourage the development of new antibiotics, and preserve the effectiveness of those that are currently in use. We must also strengthen the capacity of our public health system to diagnose and contain TB and other serious contagious diseases."

The bipartisan legislation would give the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) the authority to respond to international outbreaks of extensively drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) and increases funds for the Center's National Program for the Elimination of Tuberculosis. The bill would expand TB research at CDC and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) into:

- New diagnostic and treatment tools
- Testing the safety and efficacy of new drugs
- Vaccines
- At-risk populations
- The relationship between TB and HIV/AIDS
- Effective public health interventions

The legislation would expand CDC efforts to prevent, detect, and treat TB, with an emphasis on groups with disproportionately high infection rates including African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans. The bill increases training and education for health professionals and the public. Brown introduced similar legislation in the House the past four Congresses, and Hutchison and Kennedy introduced similar legislation in the Senate in the 108th Congress.

Earlier this year, Brown met with representatives from CDC, the World Health Organization and U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Mark Dybul to discuss growing concerns about XDR-TB. In February, Brown joined with Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Gordon Smith (R-OR), and Sam Brownback (R-KS) calling on the U.S. Department of State and the CDC to respond proactively to XDR-TB. They cited an outbreak of XDR-TB in a South African hospital in August that killed fifty-two of the fifty-three patients infected within twenty-five days.

TB funding and research are critical to all TB issues including XDR-TB. Just last week the CDC announced that dozens of airline passengers were potentially exposed to XDR-TB on international flights out of the United States. In the U.S., there are currently 49 reported cases of XDR-TB, and globally it accounts for approximately two percent of TB cases. In 2006, more than 13,000 cases of active tuberculosis were reported in the U.S. Efforts to eradicate TB in the U.S. are likely to have a major impact on the global pandemic.

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