

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 10, 1999

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

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527 927

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge you to sign an executive order that would distribute funds to the City of New York to contain the recent outbreak of mosquito-borne encephalitis, which has already claimed the lives of three elderly people. This epidemic has spread through two of the City's boroughs and may be spreading throughout the entire City and suburban Long Island.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has already sent six epidemiologists, with two more arriving this weekend, to New York to work with the City Health Department, but more assistance is desperately needed. It is estimated that containing this outbreak, will cost over \$6 million, including chemicals, contractors for spraying, individual cans of bug spray, and additional staff.

With no end to the humid weather in sight, we need to prepare for the potential spread of this epidemic. All efforts must be exhausted to prevent this from further infection. The number of suspected cases has increased to 60. Nine additional cases have been nailed down as St. Louis Encephalitis, a rare but potentially lethal illness that can cause inflammation of the brain.

In order to ensure the end to this epidemic, the CDC states that the City must continue spraying for the next three to four weeks throughout the entire City. The effort to control this situation is underway, but is very costly. We urge you to release any and all resources available to the federal government to aid in this effort.

Thank you for your consideration of this vital request. We look forward to your response. If you have any questions please contact us directly.

Sincerely,

Charles Schumer
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Joseph Crowley
Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

→ Chris, I talked to John Podesta. He'd like you to do a draft response from him. It should include what we've discussed & intend to do.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 14, 1999

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

Thank you for writing about your serious concerns about the recent outbreak of mosquito-borne encephalitis in New York City and your request for Federal assistance. The President has asked me to respond to your Friday letter and provide you with an update of our work to date to protect the health and well-being of the citizens of New York.

As of this morning, there are 11 confirmed cases of encephalitis and three deaths. This development is extremely troubling, and the President has directed us to assist the city and state in the effort to address this public health threat.

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Within 24 hours after a request for additional personnel assistance was made, CDC personnel were on the ground. As of this writing, we have a team of scientists assisting the city including those representing the fields of epidemiology, entomology, virology, and wildlife biology. We are pleased to report that CDC, together with experts from the New York City Department of Health, have just isolated a potential breeding site for the carrier mosquitoes and have already begun appropriate interventions.

The CDC personnel, reporting through their Director, Dr. Jeffrey Koplan, advise us that the state and local New York public health response has been thorough and professional. At the request of HHS Secretary Shalala, Margaret Hamburg, who is the city's former Commissioner of Health and the current Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, is playing an important consultative role to the city. Local health officials have advised these two well-respected Administration experts that the troubling situation appears to be under control.

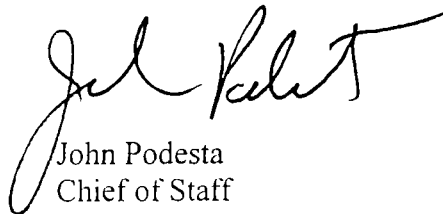
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EPA has provided important technical assistance through their field and central offices. The agency is also fielding hundreds of calls a day on their toll-free number to provide important safety tips and general information to the citizens of New York about the spraying. EPA will work with the city to ensure that the intensive education and safety campaign being conducted to notify the public about all aspects of the spraying is effective. They also advise us that they are willing to dedicate additional staff resources if the city and state believe it is necessary to do so.

While it appears from reports on the ground that we are making headway against this public health threat, we may well need to do more, and will continue to gather information and review options. You can be assured that we will continue to move aggressively and appropriately to dedicate any necessary staff, technical and financial resources to address this public health threat.

I hope you find this information to be useful. As always, we greatly appreciate your commitment to the health and well being of the people of New York.

Sincerely,



John Podesta
Chief of Staff

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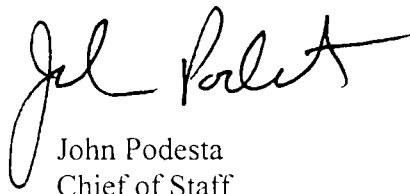
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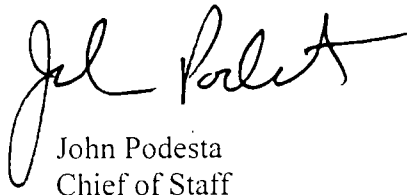
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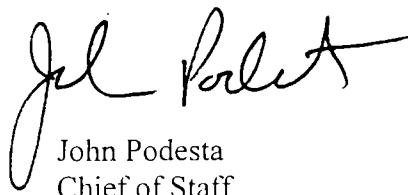
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