



**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503**

May 17, 2016
(House Rules)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 5243 – Zika Response Appropriations Act, 2016

(Rep. Rogers, R-KY)

The Administration strongly opposes H.R. 5243, the Zika Response Appropriations Act of 2016. The Zika virus poses a serious public health threat. There is active, mosquito-borne transmission of the Zika virus in approximately 50 countries, including U.S. Territories. The Zika virus is spreading in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa and abroad, and there will likely be mosquito-borne transmission within the continental United States in the coming summer months. As of May 11, 2016, there were more than 1,200 confirmed Zika cases in the continental United States and U.S. Territories, including over 110 pregnant women with confirmed cases of the Zika virus. Scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently concluded that the Zika virus is a cause of microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects. In addition, researchers are investigating an association between the Zika virus and Guillain-Barré syndrome, neurological disorders, and other adverse health outcomes.

The Administration is committed to taking necessary steps, as quickly as possible, to protect the American people from the Zika virus. In February, the Administration submitted to the Congress a request for \$1.9 billion in emergency supplemental funding. In the absence of timely action from the Congress, the Administration redirected existing funds to scale up the urgent work necessary to address the Zika virus. However, the redirected funds can only temporarily address what is needed to support the full range of activities aimed at preventing, detecting, and responding to further transmission of the Zika virus to protect the American public.

While the Administration appreciates that the Congress is finally taking action to address the Zika virus, the funding provided in H.R. 5243 is woefully inadequate to support the response our public health experts say is needed. Specifically, the Administration's full request of \$1.9 billion is needed to: reduce the risk of the Zika virus, particularly in pregnant women, by better controlling the mosquitoes that spread Zika; develop new tools, including vaccines and better diagnostics to protect the Nation from the Zika virus; and conduct crucial research projects needed to better understand the impacts of the Zika virus on infants and children.

In addition, the Administration objects to the bill's use of previously-appropriated funding as an offset. Funding to fight the Zika virus should be treated as an emergency, the same as past public health emergencies such as the Ebola and H1N1 viruses, and should not be offset. Furthermore, rescinding additional funds previously designated for Ebola and other important initiatives such as critical infrastructure funding would harm the Nation's ability to address a range of urgent, emerging, and ongoing health challenges. Ebola remains a global health threat, as evidenced by recent cases in Guinea and Liberia, and Ebola funds must be replenished to keep the disease from threatening our shores again. The Administration also objects to the bill's limitation on funding only through the end of fiscal year 2016. The CDC expects the health effects of the Zika virus to last beyond September 30, 2016, at which point the

Department of Health and Human Services would no longer have this funding for these activities and, given uncertainty around the disease, funding could run out even sooner. Like prior emergencies, the effort to protect the American people from the Zika virus should not be funded incrementally.

The Administration urges the Congress to provide full emergency supplemental funding at the level requested by the President. If the President were presented with H.R. 5243, his senior advisors would recommend he veto the bill.

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