



## **TFAH COMMENDS INTRODUCTION OF AVIAN ACT BY SENATOR OBAMA AND CALLS FOR U.S. TO STOCKPILE ANTI-VIRAL MEDICATION FOR POTENTIAL PANDEMIC FLU OUTBREAK**

Media contacts: Laura Segal (202) 223-9870 x 278 or [lsegal@tfah.org](mailto:lsegal@tfah.org) or Michael Earls (202) 223-9870 x 273 or [mearls@tfah.org](mailto:mearls@tfah.org)

**WASHINGTON, April 29, 2005** – Trust for America’s Health (TFAH) commends Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) for his introduction yesterday of the AVIAN (Attacking Viral-Influenza Across Nations) Act of 2005. Experts worldwide believe a pandemic flu outbreak is inevitable and are highly concerned about the severity of the avian influenza virus currently circulating in Asia.

“The U.S. is not prepared for a flu pandemic. The avian flu is a real and dangerous threat to the health to our nation and the world. If the virus mutates slightly, we could have a million Americans hit by the first wave of a pandemic,” said Shelley A. Hearne, DrPH, Executive Director of TFAH. “Senator Obama should be recognized for his leadership and foresight in taking action to better protect Americans by introducing this important and timely bill.”

The critical legislation includes a mandate for the federal government to stockpile the anti-viral medication oseltamivir, commonly known as Tamiflu. This medication could be an essential stop-gap measure to protect people from a lethal strain of the flu while scientists are trying to develop a vaccine. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that a pandemic flu outbreak could impact approximately 25 percent of the population in nations worldwide. Unfortunately, there is limited production capacity for this vital medication. A number of other countries have already ordered enough Tamiflu to protect 25 percent of its population in case of an outbreak, so the U.S. is already behind in the queue to place an order from the limited supply of the medication, for which there is a single manufacturer worldwide. The U.S. federal government currently has 2.3 million courses of Tamiflu stockpiled, however it would require approximately 74 million courses to cover 25 percent of the U.S. population.

Given the critical importance of Tamiflu to an immediate response to a pandemic, TFAH urges Congress to act immediately to appropriate the funds in necessary to begin procuring an adequate number of courses of Tamiflu to safeguard the U.S. population.

“We must act now,” Hearne said. “It is essential that the U.S. is in line to receive anti-viral medication in the event of a pandemic, especially since national vaccine policies and manufacturing capabilities are woefully lacking.”

Earlier this month, TFAH released an analysis that found American preparations for a pandemic flu lagging, including vaccine and treatment shortfalls, gaps in containment strategies, limited plans for how to keep the public informed, and inadequate review of state plans for quality and feasibility.

*Trust for America’s Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority.*

[www.healthyamericans.org](http://www.healthyamericans.org)

