

What State Authorities Face To Get Vaccine

Senators Susan Collins (R-Me.) and Jack Reed (D-R.I.) sent a letter Oct. 26 to Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, again prodding the smug Bush Administration that “It is essential that use of the remaining influenza vaccine be optimized to achieve greatest effectiveness.” They demanded a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) “clearinghouse” vaccine-tracking website, since state health authorities are “facing state-wide vaccine shortages and have no ability to allocate supply to comply with the new recommendations of the CDC.”

On Oct. 27, CDC did indeed take that one step toward directed allocation. The website is for restricted use by state and county health officials, and gives them a schedule through the end of December on which they can expect the remaining 20+ million Aventis Pasteur vaccine shots to arrive, as well as “voluntary” information on where to find, and how to try to reallocate, remaining standing supplies from the 30+ million from Aventis Pasteur and Medimmune FluMist already shipped.

An extensive survey put online by the Gannett newspaper chain as of Oct. 28 shows how little capability the state health authorities have to cope with the crisis. The chart compares the state’s health authorities’ vaccine supplies so far, against their over-65 population. The nation’s 35 million seniors are *only one* of the influenza risk groups defined by the CDC—in total, these risk groups surpass 100 million people—though seniors are most threatened

with fatal complications from flu.

In most cases, the state health departments’ supply at the end of October represented about half the total supply of all public health agencies, which also include county health departments, public hospitals and nursing homes, etc. But these supplies are dwarfed by the elderly population; and many of the state supplies are specifically funded, ordered, and earmarked for young children. The huge shortfall has led Massachusetts, for example, to take “healthy seniors 65-75 years of age” out of its priority vaccination population.

The table is taken from the survey as of end-October:

State	Over 65	State Vaccine Supply
Arizona	714,000	115,000
California	3.8 million	506,000
Los Angeles County	700,000	31,000
Colorado	441,000	54,000
Connecticut	471,000	None (77,000 expected)
Florida	2.9 million	None (150,000 expected)
Illinois	1.5 million	None (150,000 expected)
Indiana	763,000	18,000
Iowa	434,000	22,000
Louisiana	524,000	25,000
Maryland	625,000	50,000
Massachusetts	857,000	134,000
New York	2.5 million	450,000
Pennsylvania	1.9 million	54,000
Texas	2.2 million	250,000
New Mexico	225,000	None