



State of Ohio

Pandemic Preparedness Coordinating Committee



NEWS RELEASE

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TAFT ESTABLISHES COMMITTEE TO COORDINATE OHIO PANDEMIC FLU PREPAREDNESS EFFORTS

COLUMBUS – Governor Bob Taft today established the Pandemic Preparedness Coordinating Committee, under the State of Ohio Security Task Force (SOSTF) umbrella, to ensure integrated pandemic influenza preparedness among all state agencies.

“The State of Ohio is working hard to ensure that, should a pandemic occur, we are prepared to coordinate effectively with agencies at the federal and local levels,” said Taft. “Our number one priority is to protect the health of all Ohioans with a well-coordinated, wide-ranging plan.”

Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director J. Nick Baird, M.D., will chair the coordinating committee. Governor Taft previously asked Baird to lead the state’s pandemic preparedness efforts.

As committee chair, Baird is responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Ohio Departments of Agriculture, Health and Public Safety. Within the SOSTF framework, the committee will work with other state agencies, public and private health care providers, elected officials, businesses, utilities and the public to ensure Ohio is prepared for an influenza pandemic. The committee will work closely under the direction of Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) Director Kenneth Morckel, who also chairs the SOSTF.

“There is no evidence of H5N1 influenza in the United States at this time,” Baird said. “But we need to continue our coordinated planning efforts so we’ll be fully prepared when an influenza pandemic strikes.”

There were three influenza pandemics in the 20th century and experts believe it is only a matter of time before the first pandemic of the 21st century emerges. The H5N1 avian influenza (“bird flu”) circulating in Asia and Europe may spark the next pandemic or an unknown, novel strain may emerge.

Bob Taft, Governor

Dr. J. Nick Baird, Committee Chairman and Director, Ohio Dept. of Health

Fred Dailey, Director, Ohio Dept. of Agriculture

Kenneth L. Morckel, Director, Ohio Dept. of Public Safety

