



Congressman Tim Bishop

FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SENATOR CLINTON AND CONGRESSMAN BISHOP CALL FOR MEETING WITH SECRETARY CHERTOFF TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF PLUM ISLAND

NEW YORK, NY - Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and Congressman Bishop today called for a meeting with Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff in light of the Department's announcement yesterday that it would be undertaking a "requirements analysis" to identify a next-generation biological and agricultural defense facility to replace the Plum Island Animal Disease Center.

In a letter sent to Secretary Chertoff, Senator Clinton and Congressman Bishop emphasized the importance of keeping the internationally renowned Plum island Animal Disease Center on Plum Island and the possibility of building a new bio- and agro-defense facility on the Island. They also expressed their extreme disappointment with the Department's renegeing on its promise to consult with New York's representatives on the future of Plum Island.

[A copy of the letter is attached]

August 24, 2005

The Honorable Michael Chertoff

Secretary

United States Department of Homeland Security

Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing in response, and in distress, to a fact sheet recently released by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) entitled, "National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility," which announces a requirements analysis process to identify a next-generation biological and agricultural defense facility to replace the Plum Island Animal Disease Center facility in New York.

As your predecessor, Secretary Ridge, and DHS officials with oversight responsibilities for Plum Island know very well, we as elected representatives of this part of New York have invested considerable energy into working with the federal government to ensure the integrity of the work done at this important research facility and the safety of its workforce and the surrounding community. In communications with DHS, including

through a meeting with Secretary Ridge himself, we have been promised full communication about the issues and developments that affect Plum Island and our common interests. Therefore, it is most disappointing to learn of your agency's plans for a facility of this significance by receiving a "fact sheet."

We want to be sure that you are directly aware of how vital and critical the research conducted by the Plum Island Animal Disease Center is to keeping this nation's food supply healthy. The researchers are the premier foreign animal disease specialists in the country and we are proud of the work they do. The fact sheet that your department released to us today expresses concern over the facility's adequacy as we move forward into the 21st century. Indeed, the facility is aging and with the new threats to our nation's food supply, we agree whole-heartedly that either the promised infrastructure improvements must be made or a new facility must be built. In fact, we have been making this point to the Department of Agriculture and Homeland Security when your department took over the management of the facility. But we strongly question the idea of re-locating this facility from Plum Island, and question the underlying assumptions that have led your officials to believe this would make fiscal or policy sense.

Plum Island was first established as a foreign animal disease center because of its isolation, with no other communities or buildings occupying the Island. In addition, the very limited livestock population on the surrounding mainland would limit the extent or possibility of an accidental outbreak of a very contagious and economically devastating disease like Foot and Mouth disease. With that in mind, Congress passed a law that mandated that active foot and mouth disease could only be researched and stored on an Island and the Plum Animal Research Center was established. We remind you and the department that active foot and mouth disease has not been worked with on the mainland since that time -- the result of such action has been eradication of the disease in the United States.

We respectfully request a meeting with you as soon as Congress returns in September to discuss this matter further. Again, we appreciated the chance to work with Secretary Ridge and other agency officials on the important issues related to the Plum Island facility and look forward to a continuation of the discussion with you.

Sincerely,

Hillary Rodham Clinton Tim Bishop

United States Senate United States House of Representatives

cc: Secretary Mike Johanns, Department of Agriculture

cc: Beth Lautner, Director, Plum Island Animal Disease Center

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