



## HHS Press Conference Cause for Concern; ASA Affirms Support for Bill Removing Mercury from Vaccines for Children

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To: National Desk, Medical and Health Reporter

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BETHESDA, Md., July 20 /U.S. Newswire/ -- The Autism Society of America (ASA), the nation's most widely-recognized and largest grassroots organization serving the entire autism community, was concerned during a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) press conference yesterday, particularly because representatives from HHS, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and others "did not address the autism epidemic that exists in this country, which is growing at similar rates in many parts of the world," said Lee Grossman, president and CEO, ASA. "Instead, HHS repeated the same message regarding vaccine safety that many in the autism community have challenged."

On the subject of vaccines and autism, "ASA has consistently asked agencies to undertake more research, specifically with clinically-based subjects rather than large-scale epidemiological studies that do not address the possible subsets of those who may be more prone to injury by vaccines and their additives; has insisted that those who have been injured by vaccines be fairly compensated and receive the services and interventions that are appropriate and necessary; and has supported legislation that calls for the removal of thimerosal from all vaccines," said Grossman. And while HHS at its press conference had an opportunity to address the lack of appropriate services for individuals with autism across the lifespan, the woefully inadequate funding for research, and the steps it would take to address this national health crisis and therefore build a trusting relationship and dialog with the autism community, the presentations may have caused further divisiveness and did not directly address concerns about vaccine safety.

A step in the right direction for the autism community is the bipartisan Mercury-Free Vaccine Act of 2005 (HR. 881), introduced by Congressman Dave Weldon, MD (R, Fla.-15) and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D, N.Y.-14), and the Senate version, S. 1422, introduced by Senator Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), both of which ASA staunchly supports. The bills ensure, through law, that thimerosal will be phased out, and kept out, of vaccines.

"ASA wholeheartedly endorses both bills, and applauds legislative efforts to protect our nation's future. We appreciate the continued support of families in the autism community by Dr. Weldon, Congresswoman Maloney, and Senator Hagel," said Cathy Pratt, board chair, ASA.

"ASA looks forward to the passage of HR.881 and S. 1422, and to the removal of the potential exposure of our children to mercury through vaccines. ASA urges the passage of both bills, and we ask that the President and the Secretary of Health and Human Services directly engage the autism community to address the funding for autism-related services and research," added Grossman.

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The Autism Society of America (ASA) is the leading voice and resource of the entire autism community in education, advocacy, services, research and support. The ASA is committed to meaningful participation and self-determination in all aspects of life for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. ASA accomplishes its mission through close collaboration with a successful network of 200 chapters, and hundreds

of thousands of members and supporters. For more information about autism or ASA, visit the ASA Web site, <http://www.autism-society.org>, or call toll-free, 1-800-3AUTISM (1-800-328-8476).

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