

FEDERAL MEMBERS OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE BLOCK VACCINE-AUTISM
RESEARCH, DEFY WISHES OF ITS OWN SCIENTISTS, AUTISM COMMUNITY, AND
CONGRESS

SafeMinds Withdraws Support for Autism Research Strategic Plan, Asks Daschle to Investigate.

JANUARY 16, 2009 - In a highly unusual departure from procedure, government representatives to the Federal Interagency Autism Advisory Committee (IACC) voted this week against conducting studies on vaccine-autism research despite approval of the same studies at their prior meeting. The research was supported by numerous autism organizations and requested by IACC's scientific work groups and Congress. The maneuver to re-vote on the vaccine-autism studies was initiated by the IACC's representative from the CDC and pushed through by the IACC Chair, Dr. Tom Insel, Director of the National Institute of Mental Health of NIH.

Unlike most Federal advisory committees, the IACC is dominated by government representatives occupying 12 of the 18 seats. Of the 6 public members, 5 voted to retain the vaccine research at the meeting. The lone dissenting public member resigned from her organization, Autism Speaks, the night before the meeting. Autism Speaks has issued a statement condemning her vote.

The CDC, part of HHS along with NIH, has been criticized by parents citing failure to uphold vaccine safety. In a surprising moment of candor, Dr. Insel cited HHS conflicts of interests on vaccine-autism research due to the over 5,000 autism lawsuits pending against HHS. His comment supports the autism community's contention that those in charge of promoting vaccine use while assuring safety are fundamentally conflicted and should not investigate themselves.

IACC Member and SafeMinds Vice-President Lyn Redwood stated, "Revisiting objectives already approved did not appear on the meeting's agenda." She added, "Advocacy groups and legislators have been marginalized in this process."

Senators Enzi, Dodd, Kennedy and Santorum, as well as Representatives Barton and Smith made statements which are part of the Combating Autism Act of 2006 legislative history that research on vaccines and their components and autism should be implemented by the IACC.

Due to the IACC's actions, SafeMinds has withdrawn its support of the IACC Strategic Plan for Autism Research and requests that incoming HHS Secretary Daschle investigate the IACC's action and reconstitute the committee, including removal of NIMH as its lead agency.

SafeMinds is a private nonprofit organization that investigates and raises awareness of the risks to children of exposure to mercury from the environment and medical products, including thimerosal in vaccines. Visit www.safeminds.org to learn more.