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IOM PRESIDENT ATTEMPTS TO DEFLECT LEGITIMATE CRITICISM OF IMMUNIZATION SAFETY REVIEW COMMITTEE

***SafeMinds challenges IOM to back up words with actions – demands release of
all documents on connection between thimerosal and autism***

Washington, DC – SafeMinds issued a public challenge today to Institute of Medicine President Dr. Harvey Fineberg to release all documents and transcripts related to the Immunization Safety Review Committee. The call comes in response to a statement released by Dr. Fineberg touting the panel's open, independent and thorough process. SafeMinds is the largest nonprofit organization investigating and raising awareness into the risks to infants and children of exposure to mercury from thimerosal in vaccines. According to Dr. Fineberg's statement:

“The Immunization Safety Review Committee produced eight reports over the course of 3.5 years on vaccine safety-related topics. A list of the topics is available online at: <http://www.iom.edu/imsafety>. The IOM conducted this work at the request of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health. The scope and sponsorship of the committee is, and has always been, a matter of public record. Other than publicly posing the scope of study to the committee and delineating the specific hypotheses to be explored, the sponsoring agencies had no relationship with the committee other than when invited to present scientific information to the committee, either in public sessions or in written submissions that were placed in a publicly available file.”

The final report released by the IOM last year found no link between thimerosal in vaccines and a countrywide epidemic of autism cases – this despite an earlier IOM report and scientific evidence which suggest a potential link.

“The conclusions reached by the IOM have never added up and in fact, have only lead most autism groups to ask more questions,” stated Lyn Redwood, president of SafeMinds. “Based on the documents we have seen, the Vaccine Safety panel could never come to such a definitive conclusion. There has to be more.”

Despite Dr. Fineberg's emphatic statement of transparency, and despite the IOM's own report earlier this year citing the need for transparency in the vaccine safety oversight process to maintain public trust, repeated attempts by SafeMinds and other parent organizations to gain access to the transcripts of IOM processes and closed door meetings have gone unanswered.

A spate of recent media coverage on this issue, including a best selling book on the thimerosal-autism hypothesis, prompted Dr. Fineberg's remarks.

“It is our hope that the renewed focus on this issue will prompt the IOM to come clean so that we can work together to protect our children from further potential harm,” added Redwood.

The Coalition for SafeMinds stands for Sensible Action For Ending Mercury-Induced Neurological Disorders. Safe Minds supports research on the potential harmful effects of mercury and thimerosal. Its mission is to end the health and personal devastations caused by the needless use of mercury, especially mercury in medicines.