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**CDC ORDERS PREMATURE MERCURY-VACCINE AUTISM MEETING**  
SAFE MINDS AUTISM ADVOCACY GROUP JOINS CONG. DAVE WELDON IN DEMANDING  
POSTPONEMENT

WASHINGTON, DC – The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has ordered the Institute of Medicine to conduct a February 9<sup>th</sup> hearing to discuss the relationship between autism and mercury-based vaccines, where reports claiming no link between thimerosal (mercury) in vaccines and autism will be allowed with little response time for opposing scientific views. Safe Minds, an advocacy and research oriented non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating mercury exposure for children, sent the attached letter to the Institute of Medicine (IOM), an arm of the National Academy of Sciences under contract with the CDC, requesting the meeting be postponed and reconfigured to allow the presentation of opposing research. Congressman Dave Weldon (R-FL), a physician, sent a similar letter to the Center for Disease Control's Dr. Julie Gerberding.

The dramatic rise in autism rates in the 1990's correlates with the increase in mercury doses. Thimerosal was first marketed in the mid 1930's and autism was first described as a new, never before seen disorder in 1943, in children born in the 1930's.

The letter contends that:

- The CDC has a record of trying to force a conclusion of no link between thimerosal vaccines and childhood autism and points to a CDC study published in the November issue of *Pediatrics* making the claim. However, documents obtained by Safe Minds through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) revealed that earlier versions of the same study did not reach that conclusion, were kept secret, and the data and methodology manipulated until the desired, published result was achieved.
- Holding the meeting at the request of a government agency (CDC) in order to minimize a potential liability issue for vaccine manufacturers is in direct violation of the IOM's charter and the spirit in which the agency was founded.
- The October, 2001 IOM meeting concluded that the evidence at that time was inadequate to accept or reject a causal relationship between thimerosal vaccines and autism, and the committee then recommended the use of thimerosal-free vaccines and an extensive research agenda. To date, that research agenda has yet to be implemented.
- The IOM February 9<sup>th</sup> meeting will include a presentation of two highly controversial epidemiological studies with little response time allotted.
- On December 30, 2003, high-ranking IOM officials admitted to Safe Minds that the meeting is at the request of the CDC, and any decision to postpone it would have to be made by the CDC. However, according the 1970 IOM charter, the IOM was established to perform a vital service "working outside the framework of government to ensure scientifically informed analysis and independent guidance" which results in unbiased, evidence-based information and advice.

"Holding a hearing at this time, with little new data, is a waste of taxpayer dollars and will not best serve the public in its effort to have the best science from which to make informed vaccine decisions. Safe Minds requests that the hearing not only be rescheduled to a later date but that the future meeting allots adequate time for equal debate of this highly important issue," states the letter.