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Boozman Bulletin: Combating Zika

Newspaper headlines across the country reflect the rapid spread of the Zika virus in the United States. Arkansans and all Americans are understandably worried about Zika, the danger that it poses to our health and our ability to combat this virus.

Zika was first discovered in 1947, and until recently was not taken seriously as outbreaks were small and sporadic with little known adverse effects. What was once a disease confined along the equator has quickly become a global health threat that has been determined to cause birth defects including microcephaly, a neurological condition which results in a child being born with an abnormally small head.

In February, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Zika a public health emergency of international concern. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) activated its Emergency Operations Center to its highest level to respond to the outbreak.

It's a growing cause for concern nationally. Last week, CDC reported 2,245 cases of Zika in all 50 states, including nine cases in Arkansas due to travel to countries and territories struggling to contain the virus.

The health and safety of the American people is my top priority. That's why earlier this summer I met with CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden to ensure U.S. preparedness to fight Zika.

Frieden sounded the alarm on the need to stop the spread of Zika and requested funding for the CDC to develop the strongest response to what has the potential to be a very serious health epidemic. It's vital that we understand more about the mosquito that carries the Zika virus so we can stop it in its tracks and develop faster and better diagnostic tests for those who may have been infected. It's crucial that we provide CDC and the National Institute of Health the resources they need to create prevention methods to keep us safe.

We must take action to combat Zika. That's why I voted in favor of bipartisan legislation to provide emergency funding to finance Zika vaccine development and increase mosquito spraying and eradication. I've supported funding every step of the way, but Senate Democrats are standing in the way of efforts to fight this public health threat by blocking

compromise legislation.

Senate Democrats played politics with this bill, putting Americans at risk. Now it has been confirmed that Zika has spread by mosquito transmission in a neighborhood in Miami. CDC even issued a travel warning urging pregnant women to avoid this area.

This is a serious health concern that deserves immediate attention. It's a battle we can win, but in order to do so, we need to dedicate resources to the fight. We will have another opportunity to show the American people we are committed to stopping Zika in September. I hope all of my Senate colleagues will vote in support of funding to combat this dangerous virus.

Quick Takes:

- **Traveling Around Arkansas:** Last week I [traveled around Arkansas talking with agriculture producers and agri-business leaders](#) as part of my annual Ag Tour. The agriculture industry is an economic driver for our state. As Congress prepares the next farm bill, it's important for me to hear the ideas of our farmers, ranchers and producers about how we can improve this legislation. Having input from those in the industry is vital to crafting legislation that meets the needs of agriculture. During the tour I visited Craighead, Cleburne, Randolph, Independence, Mississippi, Cross, Crittenden, Drew, Lincoln and Desha counties.
- **Preventing Gitmo Closure:** President Obama needs to abandon his efforts to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. Last week, the Obama Administration [released 15 detainees and, judging from the information about them in a newly released Department of Defense report](#), they will likely follow the path of those who have returned to the battlefield. My colleagues and I will continue to use Congressional oversight authority to keep the President from fulfilling an ill-advised campaign pledge that jeopardizes the safety of all Americans.
- **Protecting Veterans Housing Programs:** I helped introduce the [Keeping Our Commitment to Ending Veteran Homelessness Act](#) to continue to ensure that seven Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Labor programs that help homeless veterans will continue to operate in the next fiscal year. This legislation continues the influential partnerships that our veterans rely on to get back on their feet. Preventing disruptions to these services must be a priority.
- **Celebrating 100 Years of the National Park Service:** The National Park Service [celebrates its centennial on Thursday](#). Our national parks are one of our nation's greatest treasures. Thanks to the National Park Service, the beauty of our unique sites are being preserved for generations to come.
- **Highlighting Arkansas Veterans:** The latest edition of the 'Salute to Veterans' series that highlights the service and sacrifice of Arkansas veterans who served our nation in uniform, recognized Vietnam veteran Bob Graham who served in the Marines. [Listen to his memories of his service](#). His interview will be submitted to the Veterans History Project, an initiative of the Library of Congress's American Folklife

Center to collect and retain the oral histories of our nation's veterans.

- **Connecting on Social Media:** Stay up to date with what I'm doing for Arkansans via social media. You can find me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



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