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**TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2010**

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## **Senator Blocks Measure to Produce Cancer Drugs, Curb Nuclear Terror; Physicians and Security Experts Urge Kit Bond to Halt Obstructionism**

AUSTIN, TX – An unusual coalition of medical and national-security organizations today called on U.S. Senator Kit Bond (R-MO) to lift his “hold” that is blocking legislation to relieve shortages of vital medical isotopes and reduce risks of nuclear terrorism.

The House passed the bill, the American Medical Isotope Production Act, last year by an overwhelming 400 - 17 vote, and a Senate committee reported it favorably in January 2010.

But for six months since then, Sen. Bond has single-handedly blocked consideration by the full Senate. Unless he lifts his hold, the measure will die when Congress recesses later this year.

The bill aims to promote domestic production of isotopes that are used in medical procedures for millions of Americans annually. These pharmaceuticals traditionally were imported but have been in short supply due to breakdowns at foreign production plants. The bill also would phase out exports of bomb-grade, “highly enriched” uranium (HEU) – currently used by foreign companies to produce isotopes – to persuade them to convert their production processes to safer, low-enriched uranium that cannot be stolen or diverted to make nuclear weapons.

Sen. Bond claims the bill could interrupt foreign production of isotopes prior to creating adequate domestic supplies. But experts from the U.S. Department of Energy, National Academy of Sciences, and private industry testified repeatedly that the bill would enable sufficient domestic production within about five years, while not cutting off exports until 13 years.

The coalition letter warns that Sen. Bond risks creating the isotope shortage that he warns about: “Because your hold on the legislation inhibits domestic production of medical isotopes to address such shortfalls of imported isotopes, it puts at risk medical procedures for millions of U.S. patients – precisely opposite to your stated intent.” Moreover, the experts warn, “blocking the legislation’s phase-out of HEU exports also reduces the incentive for foreign manufacturers to stop using this bomb-grade material, and thereby perpetuates unnecessary security risks.”

President Barack Obama, this past April, convened an unprecedented Nuclear Security Summit of 47 countries to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. The final communiqué called for “minimization of use of highly enriched uranium, where technically and economically feasible.”

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