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**SEN. JOE LIEBERMAN TELLS U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE IMMEDIATE ACTION
NEEDED TO REDUCE THE BIOLOGICAL RISK TO AMERICA'S FOOD SUPPLY**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Dec. 13, 2017) – In testimony today before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, former U.S. Senator and Co-Chair of the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense Joe Lieberman said immediate action is needed to protect America's food supply from biological risks.

“The increasing rate of emerging and reemerging animal diseases, along with threats and attempts by those with the intent to attack food and agriculture, mean there is an urgent need to reduce the biological risk to America's food and agricultural sector,” said Sen. Lieberman. “Our Panel believes that agricultural defense, while it has unique elements, should not be walled off from other biodefense efforts: agriculture is a critical element of our biological existence and threats to it must be viewed through the same lens as threats to or from other biological entities. In recognition of the critical nexus between human and animal health, we evaluated this matter over the last year, and discuss our detailed findings and recommendations in our 2017 report, *Defense of Animal Agriculture*.”

Sen. Lieberman was joined at the witness table by General Richard Myers, President of Kansas State University; Dr. Raymond Hammerschmidt, Professor at Michigan State University; and Dr. R.D. Meckes, State Veterinarian for North Carolina.

Sen. Lieberman told the Committee that the Study Panel found both significant achievements and serious gaps in our nation's capacity and capability to defend against major biological events.

“The good news is that the White House is now completing the National Biodefense Strategy, and the USDA and many other departments are seated at the table in drafting it,” added Sen. Lieberman. “We have reason to believe that the drafters comprehend that human, animal, and environmental health are inextricably linked, and that the Strategy and its implementation plan will be grounded in that understanding. The White House should seize the momentum generated by this process and lead all relevant agencies to a new level of planning and operating with respect to biodefense that treats animal, human, and environmental health efforts as mutual contributors to our national, economic, and health security.”

The Panel views protection of agriculture – the cultivation and breeding of animals and plants for food, fiber and other products used to sustain human life – as a critical element of national biodefense.

Sen. Lieberman noted the goal of the Study Panel’s new report is to elucidate some key, persistent challenges and to propose feasible solutions, while stimulating further conversation and most importantly, action, by both the public and private sectors.

To read the report, click [here](#).

About the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense

The [Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense](#) was established in 2014 to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the state of U.S. biodefense efforts, and to issue recommendations to foster change. The Panel’s 2015 report, *A National Blueprint for Biodefense: Leadership and Major Reform Needed to Optimize Efforts*, identified capability gaps and recommended changes to U.S. policy and law to strengthen national biodefense while optimizing resource investments. The Panel continues to assess biodefense challenges and to urge reform. Former Senator Joe Lieberman and former Governor Tom Ridge co-chair the Panel, and are joined by former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, former Representative Jim Greenwood, and the Honorable Ken Wainstein. [Hudson Institute](#) is the Panel’s fiscal sponsor.