



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas K. Duane

## Senate Passes Bill to Offer Flu Vaccinations to Parents of Infants in Neonatal Intensive Care Units of Hospitals

THOMAS K. DUANE June 2, 2009

| ISSUE: **HEALTH**

### Senate Passes Bill to Offer Flu Vaccinations To Parents of Infants in Neonatal Intensive Care Units of Hospitals

June 1, 2009

(Albany, NY)-On Monday, the Senate passed legislation (S.3911A) by a unanimous vote of 59-0 to mandate the offering of flu vaccines to parents of newborns in neonatal intensive care units (NICUs). The bill, sponsored by **Senate Health Committee Chair Thomas K. Duane**, builds upon existing law that mandates hospitals offer vaccination against polio, mumps, measles, diphtheria and rubella to anyone under the age of 18 in their care.

Influenza mortality is greatest for infants younger than six months old and vaccination is recommended for healthcare providers, caretakers and all family members. Studies have shown that vaccination rates hover in the 25 percent range for normal, healthy adults, a level that puts infants at significant risk of infection in family-centered care settings. By vaccinating all or most adults in these settings, there are potential cost savings in infant and adult care healthcare costs.

"I am proud to have sponsored this bill which we hope will be an important tool for helping to prevent flu infections in infants," said Senator Duane. "Parents can transfer the infection to their newborns unintentionally because newborns cannot be vaccinated. This bill will help curtail preventable flu infections so that no young child should have to suffer."

Individuals would be free to refuse the vaccination, but hospitals must offer the vaccine and refer the parents of patients to a location where the vaccine may be administered. The new law will allow the Health Commissioner to waive requirements in the event of influenza vaccine shortage and will go into effect 120 days after adoption.

"Administration of vaccines in NICUs is worthwhile, cost effective and it has also been shown to improve healthcare worker vaccination rates," said Senator Duane. "The tools to make this a reality are already at our disposal."

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