



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

August 2, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear Leader McConnell,

According to the Florida Department of Health, mosquitoes in South Florida have likely infected ten more people with the Zika virus – bringing the total number of locally-transmitted cases in Miami to 14. While health officials believe these locally-transmitted cases are currently contained to a one-square-mile area near downtown Miami, the fact is: an infected person anywhere in the continental U.S. who is bitten by a mosquito can spread the disease through that newly-infected mosquito. This portends dire consequences across the entire U.S.

On Friday, shortly after the first locally-transmitted cases were reported in Florida, I urged you to immediately reconvene the Senate so we can take up and pass an emergency spending bill that will provide health officials with the resources they need to stop the spread of this virus.

If you feel it would be too difficult to immediately reconvene the entire Senate, you and Sen. Reid could, under Senate rules, simply agree during one of the remaining nine pro forma sessions to allow a senator by unanimous consent to take up and pass the same \$1.1 billion Zika-funding bill that the Senate overwhelmingly passed back in May by a vote of 68 – 30. The Senate has done this in the past, so there is precedent, and we need to do so again to protect the American people from this growing public-health crisis.

The threat we face from Zika has gone from serious to emergency. I urge you to work with Sen. Reid and reach an agreement so that I, or another senator, may be recognized during one of the upcoming pro forma session and – barring any objections – send to the House a Zika-funding bill that our health officials need now, more than ever, to stop the spread of this virus. We cannot afford to wait another five weeks for Congress to return.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson