

**Chairman Johnson Opening Statement  
“Preparing for and Protecting the Nation from Zika”**

**Wednesday, June 29, 2016**

*As submitted for the record:*

The purpose of this roundtable is to examine the Zika outbreak and the threat this virus poses to our nation’s health and security.

This threat is real. As of June 22, there were 820 cases of Zika in the continental United States.

Nearly all were contracted during travel outside the U.S. In my home state of Wisconsin, there are six confirmed Zika cases related to travel. Puerto Rico has confirmed over 1,800 locally acquired Zika cases, with predictions that roughly 20 percent of Puerto Rico’s 3.5 million inhabitants will contract the virus this year. Eight women across the United States and its territories have had adverse pregnancy outcomes related to Zika.

Since the start of the epidemic in Brazil, more than 1,500 babies have been born with Zika-associated microcephaly or nervous system malformation. And yet 80 percent of people with Zika exhibit no symptoms.

These facts highlight the significant public health threat that Zika poses and the potential for devastating consequences to pregnant women and unborn babies.

As we head into peak mosquito season across most of the United States, there is still much we do not know about the virus. It is critically important to the health and well-being of this nation to obtain answers to some key questions:

First, what exactly is the Zika virus? How is it spread? What are the symptoms? And, for those who are exposed to the virus, what are the effects?

Second, where are the mosquitos that carry this virus active today and what should Americans planning to travel to Brazil for the Olympics or other affected areas be aware of?

Finally, perhaps the most important question: how can we — as individuals, as communities, and as a nation — protect ourselves and our families?

This roundtable is especially timely given the ongoing discussion on federal funding to fight the spread of Zika.

Zika is clearly a public health priority that must be addressed. I thank all of you for being here today and I look forward to our discussion.