

## National Vaccine Information Center: Public Hearings on Measles Outbreaks and Vaccine Laws Provide Opportunities for Americans to Voice Concerns

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**WASHINGTON--(BUSINESS WIRE)--**The non-profit charity National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC) is urging Americans to attend state legislative and U.S. congressional hearings focused on **measles outbreaks** in the U.S. and state vaccine laws to voice concerns to their elected representatives. This month, legislatures in Arizona, Washington and other states held public hearings on proposed changes to vaccine laws and there are hearings scheduled in Congress on **Feb. 27** and **Mar. 5**, 2019.

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NVIC **reports** that this year more than 100 vaccine-related bills have been introduced in 30 states proposing to expand, restrict or eliminate vaccine informed consent rights. NVIC is supporting 50 of the bills, including bills to add or protect personal belief vaccine exemptions.

"A number of states are proposing bills to eliminate vaccine exemptions while others are proposing to expand them," said NVIC Co-founder and President **Barbara Loe Fisher**. "The state and federal public hearings being held this year are an opportunity for Americans to communicate with their legislators about this important parental rights and civil liberty issue."

The federal government licenses vaccines, makes vaccine use recommendations and enacts vaccination requirements for persons crossing U.S. borders, while state governments enact **mandatory vaccination laws** for residents of states, including for children attending school. In 1905, the **U.S. Supreme Court affirmed** the constitutional authority of state governments to mandate vaccines but warned that vaccine laws must be "limited in their application as not to lead to injustice, oppression, or an absurd consequence" and become "cruel and inhuman to the last degree." There are few **federally approved contraindications** to vaccination and most adverse health conditions and vaccine reactions do not qualify for a medical exemption to vaccination under federal guidelines.

NVIC advocates for **public participation** in vaccine policy and law making. On Feb. 14, 2019, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Scott Gottlieb made a **public statement** warning state legislators that if they do not tighten vaccine exemptions in "lax laws," then the federal government will take action. NVIC's President responded, "The constitutional authority to mandate vaccinations belongs to the states. The FDA Commissioner heading a federal agency legally responsible for regulating the safety and effectiveness of vaccine products sold by drug companies should not be threatening state legislators with federal intervention if they don't restrict or remove exemptions in vaccine laws," said Loe Fisher.

The **National Vaccine Information Center** was established in 1982 to prevent vaccine injuries and deaths through public education. NVIC co-founders worked with Congress to secure vaccine safety informing, recording, reporting and research provisions in the **1986 National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act**. The Act gave the pharmaceutical industry a partial liability shield for harm caused by

government licensed, recommended and mandated vaccines and created a **federal vaccine injury compensation program** (VICP) alternative to a vaccine injury lawsuit.

In 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that FDA licensed vaccines are “unavoidably unsafe” and effectively granted vaccine manufacturers a **full liability shield**, even when there was evidence a company could have made a vaccine safer. More than **\$4 billion** has been awarded to children and adults harmed by federally recommended vaccines since 1988 but two out of three petitioners filing injury claims in the VICP are denied compensation.

For the past two decades, NVIC has been critical of federal agency implementation of the 1986 Act’s vaccine safety, research and **vaccine injury compensation** provisions. In **1999** and **2002**, congressional oversight hearings were held on operation of the VICP, and the **General Accountability Office** (GAO) issued an investigative report in 2014 pointing out continuing problems with the VICP.

“The integrity of the original law has been seriously compromised and no substantive action has been taken by Congress to repair damage done to the 1986 Act by eroding **amendments** and **federal agency rule making**,” said NVIC Co-founder and Vice President Kathi Williams. “Part of the current focus by Congress on disease control and vaccine laws should include hearings to hold the Department of Health and Department of Justice accountable for betraying the trust of parents obeying laws to vaccinate their children.”

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) gives **incentivizing grants** to states to achieve high vaccination rates among children with federally recommended vaccines. States with higher vaccination rates receive “bonus” funding awards and states with lower rates may receive lower grant amounts. The **CDC's recommended childhood vaccination schedule** currently is 69 doses of 16 vaccines given between the day of birth and age 18 with 50 doses given before age six.

There are **27 FDA licensed vaccines** and 16 of them are **mandated by different states** for children to attend school. There are **new vaccines in development**, many of which will be federally recommended and considered by state legislatures for mandates in the future.

The National Vaccine Information Center is the largest and oldest non-profit organization in the U.S. dedicated to preventing vaccine injuries and deaths through public education. Although NVIC does not make vaccine use recommendations, the organization supports the ethical principle of informed consent to medical risk taking and inclusion of flexible medical, religious and conscientious belief vaccine exemptions in public health policies and laws.

For more information visit [NVIC.org](http://NVIC.org) and [NVICAdvocacy.org](http://NVICAdvocacy.org).

## **Contacts**

National Vaccine Information Center  
Barbara Loe Fisher, Co-Founder & President