

7/27/60

STATEMENT OF U. S. REPRESENTATIVE JOHN E. FOGARTY RE POLIO

The Polio situation continues to remain serious in Rhode Island. Cases reported by the State Health Department to the PHS now total 70, and there have been 3 deaths. Incidents of the disease continue to remain concentrated in the Providence Metropolitan Area, although some cases have also occurred in other sections of the State.

While the number of new cases reported last week was considerably less than those reported for the period several weeks earlier, authorities tell me we cannot be sure that the peak of the epidemic has as yet been reached.

Meanwhile, the State Health Department is making Polio Vaccine fully available to everyone, and the President of the State Medical Society has pledged as many physicians as necessary to perform the injections. Mobile and fixed clinics have been established throughout the State and public media -- press, television and radio stations -- have been doing a splendid job in urging all residents to avail themselves of vaccination. I am told that since the middle of June, 195,000 polio shots have been given by public agencies and that another 110,000 injections have been administered by private physicians.

The Public Health Service is continuing to give all feasible assistance. We have the services of 8 Public Health Service Officers in addition to full consultative services from the Service's Washington Headquarters from its Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta, Georgia, and from its regional office in New York City.

I am told by the Surgeon General and by our Rhode Island Health Authorities that in addition to vaccination, there are other positive steps our people can take to protect themselves and their children.

Personal sanitation, they say, is extremely important during this epidemic period, and warning that small children should be kept out of crowds is urgently meaningful in view of the fact that Polio cases in Rhode Island continue to be concentrated in the age groups under 5 years. Health authorities also urge that all personal contacts be reduced to a minimum; that parents be very cautious of upper respiratory infections, and that all individuals - children and adults alike - avoid fatigue.

I urge that the people of Rhode Island conscientiously follow the advice of our Medical Advisors; that they get the full series of polio shots for themselves and their families; and that they follow the other medical recommendations to the end that we may rid ourselves of this epidemic at the earliest possible time.