

INTRODUCTION OF CONTAGIOUS AND INFECTIOUS DIS-  
EASES INTO THE UNITED STATES.

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M E S S A G E

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

*A communication from the president of the National Board of Health, calling attention to the necessity for additional legislation to prevent the introduction of contagious and infectious diseases into the United States.*

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MARCH 13, 1882.—Referred to the Committee on Public Health and ordered to be printed.

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*To the Senate and House of Representatives :*

I transmit herewith a communication from the president of the National Board of Health, calling attention to the necessity for additional legislation to prevent the introduction of contagious and infectious diseases into the United States from foreign countries.

The subject is commended to the careful consideration of Congress.  
CHESTER A. ARTHUR.

EXECUTIVE MANSION,  
March 13, 1882.

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NATIONAL BOARD OF HEALTH,  
Washington, D. C., March 10, 1882.

His Excellency C. A. ARTHUR,  
*President of the United States :*

SIR : I am directed by the executive committee of the National Board of Health to report to your Excellency that this office has received reliable information that small-pox is still prevailing to an alarming extent in many States along the lines of transportation of immigrants. The special dangers arising from this source appear to be twofold : Particular localities are imperiled by the actual introduction of the disease from abroad, and the enormous influx of persons unprotected by previous vaccination supplies the condition for the certain spread of the infection, and its transmission from one State into others.

It is believed that both sources of danger will continue to exist in increasing proportions during the current year. The experience of the

last few months has demonstrated the fact that the act entitled "An act to prevent the introduction of contagious and infectious diseases into the United States from foreign countries, and from one State into another," approved June 2, 1879, as well as the rules and regulations made by this board in conformity with the provisions of that act, and approved by your Excellency November 14, 1881, are inoperative, for the reason that they apply only to infected ports, and that the law officers of the government find it difficult or impossible to obtain legal proof of the fact of infection at the date of sailing of any given vessel. Furthermore the act does not make adequate provision for the evil of which the local health authorities chiefly complain; that, namely, of the continued influx of unvaccinated immigrants. The collection of large numbers of susceptible subjects in circumscribed localities into which the infection had been previously introduced makes it inevitable that the disease shall not only spread within the limits of these localities, but also that it shall be transmitted into neighboring States.

The former difficulty will be met by such amendments to the act of June 2, 1879, as will make its provisions applicable to all vessels sailing from any foreign port without imposing upon the government the obligation to prove that such port is infected. The other evil would seem to require for its effectual cure a specific provision requiring the vaccination of all immigrants not previously protected, as an apparently necessary means of preventing the introduction and continuous development of small-pox in the United States.

The executive committee would further recommend that every vessel clearing from any foreign port should be required to obtain a bill of health in the form prescribed by the National Board of Health, which form met the approval of the International Sanitary Conference at Washington, March 1, 1881.

If the suggestion of such amendments meets the approval of your Excellency it is respectfully requested that you will, in a special message to Congress, call the attention of that body to the urgency of the danger, and recommend suitable action at the earliest practicable moment.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. L. CABELL,

*President National Board of Health.*

Official:

T. J. TURNER,

*Secretary National Board of Health.*