

Frist and Hastert Let Vaccine Industry Write Its Own Multi-Billion Dollar Giveaway

Last December, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) and House Speaker Dennis Hastert inserted a provision in the Defense Appropriations bill that granted vaccine manufacturers [near-total immunity for injuries or deaths](#) (even in cases of gross negligence) caused by their drugs during a viral pandemic, such as an outbreak of the avian flu. The legislation was [worth billions of dollars](#) to a small group of drug makers.

The provision was inserted in the dead of the night, after House and Senate conferees had agreed the provision would not be included in the bill. According to Roll Call, the [brazen move was completely unprecedented](#).

[A new report](#) from Public Citizen reveals that vaccine-industry lobbyists essentially wrote the provision themselves. This morning's [Tennessean reports](#):

Vaccine industry officials helped shape legislation behind the scenes that Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist secretly amended into a bill to shield them from lawsuits, according to e-mails obtained by a public advocacy group.

E-mails and documents written by a trade group for the vaccine-makers show the organization met privately with Frist's staff and the White House about measures that would give the industry protection from lawsuits filed by people hurt by the vaccines.

The final language of the provision was exactly what the vaccine manufacturers requested in their emails and meetings.

How did the industry get such VIP treatment from Frist and Hastert? Generous campaign contributions always help. Another key component: the vaccine industry was represented by a lobbying team that included [three former Frist staffers and Dennis Hastert's son, Joshua Hastert](#).