

CAMPAIGN FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

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October 13, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As your Administration prepares the fiscal year 2007 budget request for submission to Congress, the undersigned organizations encourage you to substantially increase funding levels for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Our state and local health agencies need CDC's knowledge in order to keep our communities safe and our population healthy. Americans expect a strong CDC to protect them from local disease outbreaks, global pandemics and biological threats.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be best known for its vigilance in protecting Americans from epidemics and transmittable diseases. Staff at the CDC work with local health officials at home and abroad to track disease outbreaks, then partner with health departments and the private sector to produce and distribute critical vaccines or otherwise prevent or limit the spread of illness.

Most recently the CDC has partnered with local Gulf Coast health officials to limit preventable death and disease in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. This work is in line with the agency's mission and is important to our national security and economic stability. Also of critical importance is the work CDC scientists are undertaking overseas by closely watching the progress of H5N1, an avian influenza virus that, if transmitted more easily to humans, could hospitalize or kill several hundred thousand Americans. Given that H5N1 is now spreading among bird populations through Asia, parts of the former Soviet Union, and Northern Europe, it is prudent to ensure that the CDC has the necessary resources to carefully monitor this possible pandemic.

In addition to responding to acts of nature, the CDC also must prepare for man-made threats in this post September 11th environment. Terrorist attacks utilizing biological agents such as plague or smallpox could unleash untold suffering and stretch health resources beyond their limits. While there is comfort in knowing that CDC experts are working diligently to prepare for such events, many argue that not enough has been done to prevent mass casualties should such an event occur. Little is known about how effective some stockpiled medications will be in a crisis. Moreover, assuring that an adequately trained public health workforce is available to deliver needed medications and treatments will be important to any successful response.

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In addition to the relatively well-known work of the CDC mentioned above, national demographic and health care trends demonstrate an urgency to provide the agency with the resources it needs to fulfill its *entire* mission by strengthening its work in other, less recognized but equally critical preventive health areas.

First, the ranks of uninsured Americans have reached 45 million. These individuals often miss preventive treatments such as flu shots or low-cost health screenings, turning instead to costly emergency room visits when they become ill. Also, the baby boomer generation is moving into retirement and the projected growth of the senior population will significantly increase federal health care spending with each passing year. While we currently spend hundreds of billions of tax dollars on Medicare and Medicaid (and will soon spend even more as seniors utilize the new prescription drug benefits), the vast majority of these dollars are being used to treat illness and disease. Comparatively speaking, very little of the federal budget is invested in actively preventing chronic illness, disease, disability, injury or preventable death.

Only one-third of one percent of each federal dollar is directed to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Considering the myriad of very real health threats, the CDC's relationship with state and local health officials and appropriate non-governmental organizations should be strengthened and used to reign in health costs. By distributing its science-based health information to state and local health leaders, CDC's work helps keep Americans safer, healthier and more productive where they live, learn, work, pray and play. While federal efforts to more efficiently manage chronic illnesses certainly have merit, and prescription drug coverage under Medicare may limit the need for more costly medical interventions, the surest way to save money on health care is to prevent the onset of illness and injury in the first place.

Americans are counting on your Administration to protect their health and safety by significantly increasing the funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Sincerely,

The Campaign for Public Health
Alliance for Aging Research
American Association for Health Education
American Cancer Society
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Dental Education Association
American Diabetes Association
American Foundation for AIDS Research
American Heart Association

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American Public Health Association
American School Health Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Trauma Society
Arthritis Foundation
Association of Academic Health Centers
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine
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Coalition for American Trauma Care
Coalition for Health Funding
Coalition for Health Services Research
Coalition of National Health Education Organizations
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State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association
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