

## **CPH Statement on President's FY2011 Budget Proposal**

The Campaign for Public Health believes the Obama Administration set the bar too low for prevention and wellness funding in its most recent fiscal year 2011 budget request to Congress. Despite calling for greater focus on prevention in his first address to Congress last year, Mr. Obama's second budget request to Congress is a sharp departure from what many in the public health community felt would be a time of much-needed investments in our nation's beleaguered public health infrastructure.

In the President's budget request to Congress, the Office of Management and Budget proposed cutting the CDC's core discretionary budget by \$131 million. With a one-time shift of some \$224 million in funding from the Department of Health and Human Services, OMB may have managed to backfill this critical agency in the short term. Still, the message this sends Congress and the longer-term vision it paints for this agency are both troubling. Recommending to Congress that the CDC absorb another cut in funding is a dangerous step for our nation's public health programs and sends these critical disease prevention efforts in the wrong direction.

The Administration's budget proposal sends a hard message to local governments and state leaders who also face difficult budgets. As they cut health department employees, wellness programs and other prevention efforts due to lack of funds, CDC's support will be ever-harder to find.

After significant cuts to the agency's core budget just three years ago, and with subsequent years of declining buying power at the hands of inflation, the CDC had already scaled back in many areas. It is important to note, too, that cost-of-living increases for CDC's federal staff, utility bills and other fixed costs have risen along with inflation and cannot be cut at will. Instead, the growth of these budget items over time paired with nearly level funding for the agency make it harder for the CDC to avoid further erosion of its health protection efforts each year.

To its credit, the CDC's budget office has crafted a 2011 budget that attempts to absorb these cuts, while not detracting from the effectiveness and reach of its health protection efforts. The bulk of the budget cuts proposed by the agency come from contracting changes and from small reductions in its travel budget. CDC has also proposed several specific programs receive small increases under this Administration's FY2011 request. Infectious disease, HIV/AIDS, immunization efforts, food safety, STD prevention, autism funding and others are slated to receive slight increases in the FY2011 budget.

An unfortunate tradition among many advocates for the CDC is a propensity to focus attention on a specific budget line within the agency. As a result, many groups pay only limited attention to the health of the CDC's overall budget; focusing instead on whether their budget line increases or decreases. Unlike the National Institutes of Health, which has less than two dozen budget lines, the CDC's budget is a pie with over 160 slices. If the few programmatic increases above hold during congressional debate, the number of organizations willing to speak critically of the proposed cuts to the CDC's overall budget will be limited, even while the agency is

slated to be cut again.

CPH is keenly focused on the fact that the CDC remains in dire need of legislative champions who recognize the agency's troubling budget situation and are willing to act on its behalf. A small group of legislators are keenly aware of the agency's strengths, but we are determined to add to their ranks.