



For Immediate Release
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Four Critical Health Agencies Lack Leaders

Groups Urge Bush to Act Quickly to Name Qualified Public Health Leaders, Steer Clear of Partisan Battles

Washington, DC – More than 20 organizations representing front-line health officials, medical professionals, and groups working to protect the health of families and communities across America are calling on President Bush to act quickly to nominate qualified individuals to lead and coordinate four federal agencies tasked with protecting public health.

In a letter sent to the President this morning, the signatories noted that never before in U.S. history have so many top federal public health positions been vacant at once. These include the Surgeon General, the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The vacancies exist at a time when America faces new health threats from possible chemical and biological terrorist attacks – on top of the ongoing crisis of chronic diseases, which account for about 70 percent of all deaths in America, and infectious diseases that also take a terrible toll.

“These vacancies mean we are without the ‘Generals’ we need to safeguard our health on the home front,” the groups said. “While we appreciate recent efforts to fill these positions, we stress the need to place capable leaders with health expertise in ALL of these roles.”

The signatories also urged the White House to steer clear of partisan battles over these posts by nominating “a highly qualified cadre of leaders that are armed with the best scientific and medical expertise.”

The letter was signed by The Trust for America’s Health (TFAH); American Association for Health Education; American Association on Mental Retardation; American College of Preventive Medicine; American Heart Association; American Lung Association; American Public Health Association; American Social Health Association; Association of Academic Health Centers; Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs; Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education; CDC Foundation; National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors; National Association of County and City Health Officials; National Association of Local Boards of Health; National Association of People with AIDS; National Coalition of STD Directors; National Partnership for Immunization; Oncology Nursing Society; Physicians for Social Responsibility; Society for Public Health Education; Spina Bifida Association of America.

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The Trust for America's Health is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to protect the health and safety of all communities, especially those most at risk of environmental and other public health threats. For more information, visit www.healthyamericans.org