



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION



APHA Legislative Update April 2010

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I. **President Signs Health Reform Law**

On Tuesday, March 23, president Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act into law. The enactment of the law is a huge victory for public health thanks to the efforts of APHA members and other public health advocates! Not only will the law extend health insurance coverage to an additional 32 million uninsured Americans, provide subsidies to help individuals purchase health insurance, prevent insurance companies from discriminating against individuals with pre-existing conditions and strengthen the Medicare program, it will also provide billions of dollars of funding for public health and prevention when it is fully implemented. In fact, the new Prevention and Public Health Fund created by the law will provide \$500 million for prevention, wellness and public health activities beginning this year.

In addition to enacting the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Congress also passed the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act, which the president signed into law on March 30, 2010. This legislation improves upon the first health reform legislation by strengthening the affordability provisions relating to health insurance coverage, providing additional help to seniors who fall into the prescription drug “doughnut hole” coverage gap, and will increase federal support for state Medicaid programs.

While passage of health reform is a great achievement, it did not come without some costs. Several compromises were made along the way; the inclusion of a provision refunding abstinence-only programs as well an Executive Order issued by President Obama requiring federal officials to develop guidelines to segregate private funds for abortion services from any public funding and ordering the creation of a mechanism to ensure that community health centers cannot use federal funds for abortions. In addition, the legislation did not include a “public option” as an alternative to private insurance coverage as advocated by APHA. APHA will continue to monitor the impact of these and other provisions in the new law moving forward.

You can read a summary of the new law as it relates to APHA's 2009 Agenda for Health Reform as well as additional resources on the law's provisions and implementation timeline by visiting our [Health Reform Update](#) page online.

Thanks again to all of the APHA members and advocates who made passage of comprehensive and affordable health reform with strong public health and prevention provisions a reality!

II. National Public Health Week – Legislative Priorities

April 5th – 11th is National Public Health Week 2010, and you can help make it a success! Strong, healthy communities are dependent upon strong public health systems across America, and that begins with YOU. This week we are asking our members and public health advocates to take the time to respond to our daily action alert requests by sending a message to Congress supporting our 2010 legislative priorities.

Public Health Funding in Fiscal Year 2011

Past budget cuts to CDC, HRSA, and other public health service agencies, along with new challenges and responsibilities, have caused these critically important agencies to do more with less and to struggle to provide basic public health services. As the House and Senate Appropriations Committees are deciding how to complete the fiscal year 2011 appropriations bills over the coming months, it is important that they hear from you on the importance of increasing public health funding.

Find out more information on agency and program specific funding requests on our [APHA and Coalition Letters](#) page online.

[Urge Congress to Support Public Health Funding in FY 2011!](#) Please send a letter TODAY voicing your support for the highest possible funding increase for essential public health service agencies.

Food Safety Reform

Every year, millions of Americans are sickened from consuming contaminated food, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized, and thousands die. Continued outbreaks of foodborne illness over the last several years have demonstrated that these outbreaks are due to widespread problems with our broken food safety system. The Senate is expected to vote on S. 510, the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act early next week.

Information on the important public health provisions included in S. 510 is available online in APHA's [Creating a Safe Food System for America](#) issue brief.

[Tell the Senate to Support Food Safety Reform!](#) Please send a letter urging your Senators to support the FDA Food Modernization Act when it comes to the floor next week.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization

Good nutrition should begin in childhood when eating habits are formed and chronic diseases begin to develop. Yet over the last two decades, rates of obesity have tripled in children and adolescents. As Congress works to reauthorize our nation's child nutrition policies, school nutrition and wellness policies must be a priority.

APHA's [priorities for reauthorization of the child nutrition](#) programs are available online.

[Urge Congress to Strengthen Child Nutrition and Wellness Policies!](#) Please send a letter to your Senators and Representative urging them to work to improve the nutrition and wellness policies in our nation's schools.

Public Health Provisions in Transportation Law

A healthy community is one that promotes healthy people by ensuring access to affordable and safe housing; nutritious food; clean air and water; mass transportation; safe sidewalks, streets, and playgrounds; health services and opportunities for social networking.

Check out APHA's transportation issue brief, [At the Intersection of Public Health and Transportation: Promoting Healthy Transportation Policy](#), for more information.

[Tell Congress Transportation Policy is a Public Health Issue!](#) Please send a letter urging Congress to promote strong public health provisions – safety and equity – when they consider the reauthorization of federal transportation law.

Climate Change Legislation

From changes in vector borne diseases to impacts on drinking water supply to extreme weather events, we are already seeing the effects of climate change on the health of people across the globe. While the House of Representatives passed climate change legislation with strong public health provisions last year, the full Senate has not yet acted. Over the past several months, Senators Kerry (D-Mass.), Lieberman (I-Conn.) and Graham (R-S.C.) have been working together to develop a bipartisan climate bill that will be introduced in late April. APHA is encouraging the trio to include the public health and climate change provisions included in the House-passed bill and an earlier climate bill sponsored by Kerry which would also create a Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Fund that would provide funding for state and local health department preparedness and assessment activities around climate change and would also fund workforce development and additional research into the health impacts of climate change.

You can find out more about the health impacts of climate change by reading APHA's fact sheet, [Climate Change is a Public Health Issue](#).

[Tell Your Senators that Climate Change is a Public Health Issue!](#) Send a message to your Senators TODAY urging them to ensure strong public health provisions are included in any bill considered by the full Senate.

III. Policy Watch: Public Health News From the States

Denver Colorado Passes the Colorado Clean Air-Clean Jobs Act

The Colorado Clean Air-Clean Jobs Act passed state's House of Representatives and Senate by wide margins on March 31st. The bill was introduced with bipartisan sponsorship and received increased attention as it may serve as a national model for reducing air pollution. The legislation would increase the use of clean energy sources, strengthen the economy by creating green jobs and seeks to limit power-plant emissions by steering energy produces away from coal and towards natural gas by 2017. Expressing support for the legislation since its introduction, Governor Bill Ritter is expected to sign it in the coming days.

Legislative Update Conference Call

Join APHA's Government Relations staff for a conference call to review the April Legislative Update. The call will be held on Monday, April 12, 2010 at 1:00pm (EST). Call (800) 442-5794; Passcode is 141930. Any problems with the call-in number should be directed to customer service at (877) 807-0970.

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