

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 10, 2008

CONTACT: Damon Thompson
202-833-0009/dthompson@prevent.org

**Increase Public Health Work Force by 100,000 Employees,
Public Health Groups Urge Harkin, Coburn**

WASHINGTON (Dec. 10, 2008) – Congress should increase federal funding to allow state health departments to hire an additional 100,000 state and local public health employees, the presidents of three national public health organizations said today in a letter to two senators who were holding a hearing on health reform legislation.

Citing serious shortages in the public health work force, the heads of Partnership for Prevention, the American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM), and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), said their proposal would be consistent with President-elect Obama's recent pledge to invest heavily in the nation's infrastructure.

"The public health infrastructure is in dire need of assistance," wrote Partnership Interim Corinne G. Husten, ACPM President Michael D. Parkinson and ASTHO President Judith A. Monroe said in their letter to Sens. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, and Tom Coburn, R-Okla.

"These workers not only help to keep America healthy and productive, but they also form our first line of defense whenever health emergencies arise through disease or disasters," they said. "We saw ample evidence of that earlier this year during the massive floods in Iowa."

They noted that the Association of Schools of Public Health has determined that the nation faces a shortage of 250,000 public health professionals. Meanwhile, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) has called for an increase of 10,000 public health physicians. ASTHO has said these shortages may become even worse in the near future, since 20 percent of state and local health agency workers are expected to reach retirement age within the next three years.

"We must invest now to ensure that we have a public health work force that has the size and expertise needed to meet future challenges," the presidents said.

Harkin chaired Wednesday's hearing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee about of health reform issues related to prevention and public health. Coburn is the ranking Republican on that committee.

###

Partnership for Prevention is a membership organization of businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies seeking to advance policies and practices that promote health and prevent disease. www.prevent.org

The American College of Preventive Medicine is the national professional society for physicians committed to disease prevention and health promotion. ACPM's 2,000 members are engaged in preventive medicine practice, teaching and research. www.acpm.org

ASTHO is a non-profit membership association representing the chiefs of state and territorial health agencies and the 120,000 individuals who work for them. www.astho.org

