



Hot on *The Hill*

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Get Involved!

- Make plans to attend the Annual Health Education Advocacy Summit on February 21-23, 2009 in Washington, DC. Pre-registration ends January 30!
- Stay up to date by reading your local paper or visiting a national news outlet webpage
- Visit your Member of Congress and let them know about your work as a health educator and SOPHE's work nationally
- Encourage others to join SOPHE and participate in SOPHE advocacy events and activities

CHANGE Comes to Washington *Be Part of History and Shaping the Future*

On January 20, millions of Americans came to Washington, DC in record breaking numbers to witness the inauguration of President Barack Obama. The historic campaign, election and now inauguration of President Obama has created much excitement in a city that is known for its hard nosed politics. The 44th Administration begins with several key individuals at the helm. In addition to Vice President Joseph Biden, the Obama Administration will house Rahm Emanuel (D-IL) as White House Chief of Staff, Tom Daschle as the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), William Corr as Deputy Secretary of HHS, Lisa P. Jackson for the Environmental Protection Agency and Dr. Frank Torti as the acting head of the Food and Drug Administration.



In addition to a new Administration, the US Congress began their 111th session earlier this month. The Senate will now host 58 Democrats (a gain of 8 seats) and 41 Republicans with the Minnesota Senate race still undecided. Democrat Al Franken leads Republican Norm Coleman in that race, but a court challenge by Coleman looks to leave that seat undecided for a number of months. As many analysts predicted, the Democrats fell just short of meeting the 60 vote threshold needed in the Senate to pass any legislation. In the House, Democrats (up 22 seats) maintain their majority with 257 seats and the Republicans now hold 178 seats.

Key posts in the House and Senate have also witnessed a shake up with the start of the new Congress. In the House, Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA), previously the Chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, took over the gavel of the House Energy & Commerce Committee from longtime Chairman John Dingell (D-MI), after a vote of 137-122 in the full House Democratic Caucus. In the Senate, Appropriations Committee Chairman Robert Byrd (D-WV) announced on November 7 that he will be stepping down from his post; Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI) is next in line to take over the chairmanship.

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Daschle and Corr to Lead HHS, Other Familiar Faces on the Obama Transition Team

On November 19, the Obama Administration announced former Senator Tom Daschle as the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). Daschle will play a key role in the Administration's policies on health reform and will also serve as the official White House health "czar" so that he reports directly to the President. William

Corr was also announced as the Deputy Secretary for HHS earlier this month. Mr. Corr comes from the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, where he was the Executive Director. Other Transition team leads that are may take a key role in the Obama Administration include Dr. Nicole Lurie, Dr. Jeffery Koplan and Ms. Martha Katz. Dr. Lurie

previously served as principal deputy assistant secretary for health in the Clinton Administration and is now with the RAND Corporation. Dr. Jeffery Koplan, former CDC Director and SOPHE Honorary Fellow, and Ms. Martha Katz also recently visited CDC as a part of Obama's Transition Team.

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Since the 111th Congress returned to session, it has worked to finish the FY09 budget and address 12 outstanding appropriations bills.

SOPHE will be working with other stakeholders through letters and meetings to try to bring the Senate budget numbers for CDC, NIH and other agencies up to the House levels. Meanwhile, meetings have begun with the members of various Administration staff and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on the FY2010 budget.

To keep you informed, National SOPHE staff will be planning upcoming webinars and publishing various updates in *News U Can Use* and via email. National SOPHE staff will work to educate all new Members of Congress and the Obama Administration about SOPHE's priorities in health promotion, health equity and public health. However, we cannot do this alone – we need all of YOU to get to know your new and returning Members of Congress, as well as learn who the key contacts are in the Obama Administration.



You can do this by:

- Reading your local paper or visiting a national news outlet webpage to keep up to date on the latest announcements.
- Visiting your Member of Congress, whether new or returning, before January. Let them know about your work as a health educator and SOPHE's work nationally. Encourage them to visit your health program or academic setting.
- Encouraging other Health Educators to join SOPHE and participate in SOPHE advocacy events and activities.
- **Make plans to attend the Annual Health Education Advocacy Summit on February 21-23, 2009 in Washington, DC.** Here you will learn how to effectively hone your advocacy skills as well as meet with key Members of Congress. Our goal for the Summit is to educate Members of Congress as well as to make sure that the role of Health Education is not forgotten on the road to health reform.

President Obama's Top Priorities

President Obama, has named his top priorities for the new Administration as 1) economic stimulus, 2) energy independence, and 3) healthcare reform. His stated plans in these areas are briefly reviewed below.

Economic Stimulus

With the Housing market still slumping, the stock market growing increasingly volatile, and talks of a deep recession growing, President-elect Obama's top priority will be to stabilize the failing American economy. He and his economic advisors in the White House will be charged with ensuring proper implementation and oversight of the \$700 billion Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP). Moreover, they are likely to put pressure on Congress to continue examining the causes of the recent economic collapse and finding ways to overhaul



the regulatory structure of the U.S. financial system.

A second stimulus package is also in the works, with the House announcing a package worth over \$800 billion. The House included \$3 billion for disease prevention with \$545 million for chronic disease prevention programs, \$500 million for Healthy Communities and \$30 million for public health workforce. The House package also includes \$900 million for biomedical research, including chronic disease. The Senate is working on their version of the economic stimulus package and both hope to pass a bill before February 16.

Energy Independence

Over the course of the campaign, Obama called for a \$150B investment over the next ten years in developing alternative fuels such as clean coal and ethanol, promote the development of cleaner automobiles with higher mileage standards, and aggressively

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"We must advocate. We must dare to step inside circles that are unfamiliar to us as public health leaders. We must advocate for a broader view than our own borders dictate. We must be willing to argue that public health should take a higher place on political and budgetary agendas."

-David Satcher, MD, PhD
Former Surgeon General

12th Annual Health Education Advocacy Summit

The elections may be over, but work on behalf of health promotion is just beginning! You are invited to shape the exciting future of health reform and prevention by attending the 12th Annual Health Education Advocacy Summit, February 21-23, 2009, at the L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington, DC. All are welcome and strongly encouraged to attend, with registration rates being held at 2008 rates.

The Advocacy Summit combines 1 ½ days of intensive training on policy advocacy and a core advocacy agenda, capped off by visits with legislators on Capitol Hill. Participants receive either basic or advanced-level advocacy training and briefings on specific legislative issues by experienced professionals from the government relations staffs of key public health organizations. They "walk the talk" by visiting, either individually or in state delegations, with members of Congressional representatives or other Federal officials in Washington, DC.

"The balance of power has significantly shifted in the Administration as well as Congress," says Bob Strack, PhD, SOPHE Trustee for Advocacy & Resolutions. "This historic time commands that health educators— both past Summit attendees and rookies— be at the table to educate and advocate for health promotion."

This year's legislative "asks" will enable the health education profession to speak with a collective voice on priority legislative issues of vital interest to the health education community, at a critical point in the development of the Federal budget.



These legislative priorities have been identified as the following:

- Prioritizing prevention— focusing on health reform
- Function 550 – which provides funding for all health and education programs
- Appropriations for CDC's

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion

- Appropriations for CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH)
- Appropriations for CDC's REACH US program

The summit is organized by the Coalition of National Health Education Organizations and coordinated by SOPHE.

For more information or to register for the Summit, visit www.healtheducationadvocate.org. **Hurry – pre-registration deadline is January 30.**

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capping carbon emissions. Some monies have been set aside for rail development and greener initiatives in the House economic stimulus bill but advocates will look to the reauthorization of the transportation bill to include greener, healthier initiatives in local communities.



Healthcare Reform

Healthcare reform, will likely be the third of the top priorities addressed, however Senate leaders are already drafting health care proposals to be introduced in the coming months (see Baucus on page 4).

- **Universal Coverage:** Work towards universal coverage while mandating 100% coverage of children. The Obama administration will look to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule early in 2009.
- **Uninsured:** Develop a National Health Insurance Exchange which would provide uninsured people with access to private providers. Employers have to "pay or play" – provide healthcare for employees or pay in to the National Health Insurance Exchange. Small businesses will be exempt from this requirement and receive tax credits to offset the expense of providing healthcare to their employees.
- **Costs:** Control costs through increased emphasis on prevention and investment in technology to streamline processes.
- **HHS:** With Daschle at the helm of HHS, a veteran of the early 90s health reform attempt, one can be sure to see this issue arise in the first or second year of the Obama Presidency.

**Deadline:
February 2, 2009**

SOPHE State Health Policy Institute

The State Health Policy Institute (SHPI) is a new SOPHE initiative, in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which aims to form an elite corps of Health Promotion Policy Experts (HPPEs). HPPEs will be awarded training scholarships and will become specialists in educating their state legislators and other professionals on the latest policy and research in chronic disease prevention and control. We are seeking interested individuals who have a passion for this work and are looking to make a difference!

If awarded a SHPI training scholarship you will be expected to participate in a one-day training on May 6, 2009 in New Orleans, Louisiana, immediately preceding SOPHE's 2009 Midyear Meeting.

For more information, contact:

Rachael Dombrowski, rdombrowski@sophe.org.

To apply visit: <http://www.sophe.org>



Senator Baucus Issues "Call to Action" on Health Reform

On November 12, Senate Finance Committee Chair Max Baucus (D-MT) released a white paper on health care reform, "Call to Action – Health Reform 2009." The plan is the culmination of the Finance Committee's research on health care reform in 2008. The white paper is not a legislative proposal, but a policy brief that offers a sustainable plan for health care reform, including health care coverage, quality, and cost.

The "Call to Action" has three equally important legs: (1) a policy that ensures meaningful coverage and care to all Americans; (2) an insistence that any such expansion be coupled with an and over time – less costly care; and (3) an absolute commitment to weed out waste, eliminate over-payments, and design a sustainable financing system that works for taxpayers as well as for the nation's recipients and providers of health care.

Baucus focuses a chapter on addressing racial and ethnic health disparities. The Senator suggests several factors affecting health care for racial and ethnic minorities, one of which is lack of access to care. Inadequate access, according to Baucus, is due to lack of health insurance cov-

erage, language barriers, and geographic location. To tackle lack of health coverage, Baucus would make health care available and affordable by offering subsidies to low-income families. To address language barriers among a diverse patient population, health providers should be linguistically and culturally competent. In addition to addressing health coverage and cultural competency, Baucus states that policies which address inadequate housing, poor wages, education, and clean environments—or social determinants emphasis on higher quality, greater value, of health—are equally as important. Finally, Baucus calls for the complete standardization of data collection. This requires that more data is collected based on race, ethnicity, and gender.

Many parts of his plan would require an initial financial investment but, over time, would improve the quality and reduce the cost of the health care that Americans receive—putting our system on a more sustainable path. To read the Senator's white paper, please visit: <http://finance.senate.gov/healthreform2009/home.html>.



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