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**Bush Budget Cuts in CDC and Public Health Programs Putting Nation's Health At-Risk,  
Warns Health Advocacy Group**

**Washington, DC, February 6, 2003** – Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a nonprofit advocacy group focused on improving the nation's health, warned that the President's 2004 budget issued this week leaves vital programs without the funds and resources needed to adequately protect the health and safety of communities across the nation.

"The diagnosis is clear – the American public health system is sick, yet, the Administration's budget does not provide the cure." said Governor Lowell Weicker, Jr., President of TFAH's Board and former chairman of the Senate appropriations subcommittee that oversees the nation's public health defenses. "The September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist assaults and the subsequent anthrax attacks have illuminated what the public health field has long known: the U.S. public health system has been under-funded for nearly 30 years and is ill-prepared to provide an effective health defense system against new threats of bioterrorism or chronic diseases. This is essentially a flat-line budget, with cuts in some key programs, and it doesn't provide the resources we need to bring this ailing public health patient back to life."

Weicker added, "while the Steps to a Healthier U.S. initiative is a good start toward addressing diabetes, obesity, and asthma, it doesn't extend the life-support we need to the wider range of chronic illnesses, including cancer, heart disease, and Parkinson's. Chronic diseases are responsible for 70 percent of deaths across America and cost the country \$750 billion annually."

"Our nation is facing a wide range of epidemics – from cancer to the West Nile Virus to potential threats posed by terrorism. The need to revitalize and modernize our public health system, which focuses on disease prevention, has never been more urgent," said Shelley A. Hearne, DrPH, Executive Director of TFAH. "Even in a time of difficult budget decisions, Americans shouldn't have to sacrifice their health in order to balance the federal budget. We can put taxpayer dollars to work to revitalize and modernize our entire public health system, while preparing for terrorist germ warfare. As we bolster resources to prepare communities for possible acts of bioterrorism, our homeland health security dollars can and should be able to do 'double duty,' to increase our ability to respond to a full range of health threats."

"This is not the time to cut public health expenditures, in fact we should be talking about doubling funding for these critical prevention and protection programs over the next five years," said Weicker. "During the past five years, Congress has had the foresight to nearly double the National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget, putting the country on the right track toward an effective bio-medical research program. Now, Congress needs to balance the equation by investing in prevention, intervention, and treatment. Doubling the funding for public health programs is key to safeguarding the health and safety of Americans from current and emerging health threats."

Among TFAH's specific concerns with the President's FY 2004 budget:

- Among the CDC and other public health programs experiencing cutbacks are those responsible for protecting environmental health, safeguarding food safety, controlling infectious disease, and reducing birth defects.
- Bioterrorism preparedness funding has been reduced by \$233 million, and no additional funds are provided to support the mandated health worker smallpox vaccination program, despite the concerns from state and local health departments that their current bioterrorism preparedness funds already have been depleted to fulfill this program.
- Childhood immunizations programs have been reduced by at least \$28 million from the FY02 appropriations level. (FY03 appropriations have not been enacted for these programs as of 2/6/03).
- The Epidemic Service and Response Program, which trains epidemiologists to detect and control disease outbreaks, has been cut. In FY02, officers from this program responded to more than 69 disease outbreaks around the country.

Trust for America's Health (TFAH) is a national nonprofit whose mission is to protect the health and safety of all communities from current and emerging threats by strengthening the fundamentals of our public health defenses. More information about TFAH is available at [www.healthyamericans.org](http://www.healthyamericans.org).

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