



**TWO-YEARS AFTER THE ANTHRAX ATTACKS, PUBLIC HEALTH
PREPAREDNESS STILL WEAKEST LINK OF HOMELAND SECURITY,
EXPERT SAYS**

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Washington, DC, October 2, 2003 – The following is a statement by Shelley A. Hearne, DrPH, Executive Director of Trust for America’s Health and Visiting Scholar at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University:

“Today marks the recognized second-anniversary of the tragic anthrax attacks in the U.S. These attacks undeniably demonstrated the crucial, pivotal role that our public health system plays in our national defense. Unfortunately, they also demonstrated the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of that system, which had been woefully neglected and under-funded during the past thirty years.

“While there have been initial investments, including nearly \$2 billion in federal funds, devoted to improving our public health defenses in the wake of September 11, 2001 and the anthrax events, much more needs to be done. Public health remains the weakest link of homeland security.

“To further compound the existing deficiencies, the unparalleled budget crises at the state and local levels threaten to undermine any advancements. We don’t know if the next big health threat will come in the form of biological or chemical terrorism or from nature. What we do know is that if we continue down our current path, we won’t be prepared to respond to a threat in either form.

“Throwing some money at the problem isn’t enough. Make no mistake, we are still very vulnerable. We must make a concerted investment to ensure that America is protected by providing the workforce and technology needed to respond to today’s modern health threats.”

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Trust for America’s Health is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority.