



August 29, 2007

The Honorable Henry Waxman  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2157 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lois Capps  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1110 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Waxman and Congresswoman Capps:

On behalf of Trust for America's Health (TFAH), I commend your leadership through introduction of H.R. 3447, the *Surgeon General Independence Act*, legislation designed to safeguard that preeminent position's professional independence.

Throughout its history, the Office of the Surgeon General has been seen as an independent voice for science and public health. As the nation faces more and more complex public health challenges – from bioterrorist attacks and the threat of pandemic flu to obesity and other chronic diseases – it is essential that policies developed by the Administration and Congress be based upon science. It is important that the Surgeon General be in a position to articulate what the science tells us, free of political, ideological or other constraints. Yet, as recent congressional testimony has shown, political interference can hamper the Surgeon General's ability to serve as a strong, independent voice for public health.

With this in mind, we are very supportive of H.R. 3447. This bill would clarify that anything produced by the Surgeon General be guided by the best available public health science; require the Surgeon General to submit a budget directly to the Administration and to Congress each year; provide that a Surgeon General can only be removed from office for cause; and only allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services the authority to block publication of a Surgeon General's Report or Call to Action. We believe that the reforms in this bill will help maintain the integrity and independence of the Surgeon General and limit political interference in the Surgeon General's work.

Again, I want to commend your leadership and thank you for introducing this important public health legislation. TFAH looks forward to working with you on this and other important public health initiatives in the future. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Richard Hamburg at (202) 223-9876.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levi".

Jeffrey Levi, PhD  
Executive Director