

PRESS RELEASE

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**Governor's Proposed FY'07 Budget Ignores Public
Health Funding Crisis;
Weather Tragedy Demonstrates Role of Local Public Health Services**

Today, the Illinois Association of Public Health Administrators (IAPHA), an organization representing 84 certified local health departments in Illinois, is calling for Governor Blagojevich and the members of the Illinois General

Assembly to address the inadequate 2007 budget proposal for the delivery of services to protect the health and safety of Illinois communities. We are asking for a modest increase of \$10 million dollars to the \$14 million in the Local Health Protection Grant Line.

"In his FY'07 budget, the Governor has ignored the investment of resources into preventive health services, while maintaining that Health Care is a key policy issue of his administration," said IAPHA President Greg Chance. Governor Blagojevich has introduced over \$250 million in new programs for FY'2007, while neglecting current under-funded programs that provide basic prevention and health services across the state. With a recent local event of the Central Illinois tornado storm on March 12/13, 2006, local public health agencies across Illinois are alarmed at the limited funding available. IAPHA President Greg Chance commented, "This week's natural disaster crisis in Central Illinois

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highlights one of many issues that face local public health departments. County health departments have already absorbed a number of grant program reductions and years of neglect within the State budget.”

Central Illinois’ recent weather tragedy of tornados called upon local public health to identify, monitor and re-inspect restaurants which were closed due to power outages, assure potable water supplies, and respond to other health and safety concerns. Adequate funding is a must to protecting and ensuring the communities health.

In the Governor’s proposed budget for fiscal year 2007, a stagnant \$14 million dollars is proposed to go to local health departments to provide mandated services of restaurant inspections to prevent food borne illness, childhood immunizations, and infectious disease investigations. Funding for these basic services hasn’t been increased in 6-7 years! Current funding only covers about 33% of the expenses for providing these vital services. Another \$10 million in funding would bolster these key programs at the local level.

Mark Stevens, legislative chair for IAPHA explained that “this extreme shortfall in funding, coupled with categorical grant funding for tobacco or emergency response, require local health departments to address the dilemma of prioritization of services which may put their communities at a risk regarding key health protection programs.” Health departments across the state have made up the shortfall in funding through local tax dollars and service fees. But over the years, these revenue streams are not keeping up with the rising cost of key prevention services.

Due to this inequity in funding, when local health departments are faced with responding to a public health crisis, such as monkey pox outbreak, the distribution and administration of flu-vaccine, or a food borne disease outbreak, resources get stretched very thin, to the point that routine public health programs such as restaurant inspections or infectious disease report investigations suffer. IAPHA President elect, Miriam Link-Mullison commented, “with new diseases emerging and the role of public health expanding, now is not the time to cut public health out of state funding increases. “

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