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CSTE and APHL Applaud Senate and House Introduction of “National Integrated Public Health Surveillance Systems and Reportable Conditions Act of 2008”

Washington—The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) and their members, the nation’s state and territorial epidemiologists and the state and local governmental public health laboratories, are pleased by the introduction of S. 3476 and H.R. 6905, bills that will significantly enhance public health throughout the nation.

“CSTE truly appreciates the foresight and leadership of Senators Chuck Hagel and Jeff Bingaman, along with Congressman Lee Terry, Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin and Congressman Edolphus Towns, in addressing current critical needs in public health,” said Perry F. Smith, MD, president of CSTE. “Passage of these bills will benefit and protect all of us from the continuing threat of emerging diseases and intentional or accidental events that threaten our public’s health,” continued Smith. “The bills bolster public health capacity at the local and state levels by increasing epidemiologic and public laboratory capacity and workforce. They also lay the groundwork for a much stronger national disease detection system.”

“I deeply appreciate and am very grateful for the efforts of Senators Hagel and Bingaman and Congressman Terry, Congresswoman Baldwin and Congressman Towns in crafting legislation that will significantly advance public health by providing much-needed funding into programs that create and build capacity in state and local public health laboratories,” said Frances Pouch Downes, DrPH, director of the Michigan Public Health Laboratory and president of APHL. “These bills appropriately fund initiatives that will increase the public health workforce and improve its ability to conduct surveillance, detect outbreaks and issue reports electronically – especially reports on laboratory test orders and results. The public’s health will be dramatically improved through this wise infusion of resources.

Enactment of the legislation is a key priority for both CSTE and APHL.

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“Senators Hagel and Bingaman and Representatives Terry, Baldwin and Towns are leading a bold effort to tackle shortages in three critical areas of public health, including epidemiologists, laboratory scientists and informatics specialists,” said Patrick McConnon, executive director of CSTE.

"This legislation is important because it addresses a significant gap in our public health preparedness efforts – the challenge of nationally reported diseases," stated Steven Hinrichs, MD, director of the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory and a member of the National Biosurveillance Advisory Subcommittee. “The work of Senators Hagel and Bingaman and Congressman Terry, Congresswoman Baldwin and Congressman Towns in this area is commendable,” said Hinrichs, “and I thank them.”

The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists is an organization that supports epidemiologists practicing at the state, territorial, tribal and local levels.

The Association of Public Health Laboratories is a national non-profit located in Silver Spring, MD, that is dedicated to working with its members to strengthen governmental laboratories with a public health mandate. By promoting effective programs and public policy, APHL strives to provide public health laboratories with the resources and infrastructure needed to protect the health of US residents and to prevent and control disease globally. Visit www.aphl.org.

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