



Trust for America's Health Applauds Congress for Providing Appropriations for Nationwide Health Tracking Network

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Washington, DC, February 14, 2003 – Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a nonprofit advocacy group focused on improving the nation's health, applauded the 108th Congress for including \$28 million to support a nationwide health tracking network in the omnibus FY '03 appropriations bill, which passed today.

“This is phenomenal progress toward giving our nation the information it needs to unlock the mysteries behind chronic diseases, like cancer, heart disease, and asthma,” said Shelley A. Hearne, DrPH, Executive Director of TFAH. “The bi-partisan support for this funding in a tough budget year underscores the importance of tracking chronic diseases, which impacts every community across the country.”

Chronic diseases are responsible for 70 percent of deaths across America. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a majority of chronic diseases are preventable through strong public health measures. These measures include a nationwide network to study where and when these types of deadly diseases occur and their potential links to the environment. “Such a tracking system exists for infectious diseases like West Nile Virus. Now, it's time to replicate it for the debilitating and chronic diseases from which the vast majority of Americans will die. Once we replace fear with facts, we can better protect our nation's health,” added Hearne.

This year's funding builds upon the \$17.5 million Congress allocated last year for a pilot program that awarded grants to 20 states and cities to establish health tracking programs. Legislation to create a full, comprehensive Nationwide Health Tracking Network is expected to be reintroduced in the coming year. This network is estimated to cost \$275 million a year, which amounts to less than \$1 for each American, and is just a fraction of the \$750 billion annual costs associated with chronic diseases.

TFAH's 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.

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