

▶ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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Environmental Health and Public Health Are Important to Health Care Reform

As I write this column, throughout the country there is much debate on health care reform. Members of both houses of Congress (Senators and House Representatives), pundits, individuals representing special interest factions, news reporters, and U.S. citizens in general are debating the merits (pros and cons) of how health care should or could be provided and paid for in the United States. The U.S. House of Representatives just passed the health reform bill by a small margin. I listen to the debates and speeches intently and intensely, at this point having no clue as to where it all will end. Two things, however, are very clear to me. First, health care costs are a major consideration. Second, which is the focus of this column, it seems to me that the best way to help keep people healthy and also lower health care costs is to prevent disease and injury.

This column is purposely short because I really want to direct you to two other places in this issue of the *Journal*. First, I would like to invite you to review the commentary by Dr. Monroe Morgan (page 62). He provides an elegant explanation about the role and significance of public health and environmental health to health care and health outcomes.

This letter puts NEHA on record as favoring public health funding support...

Next, I would like you to know that your organization, NEHA, is right in the middle of this public discussion. On the following page there is a copy of a letter sent from NEHA to the president of the United States. It is my privilege to represent our members as the signer of this document delivered to the highest levels of our government. This letter puts NEHA on record as favoring public health funding support as a part of the health care reform legislation that is materializing. NEHA has been working closely with the Trust for America's Health (TFAH) on this issue. On October 15, 2009, TFAH took our letter, along with 42 oth-

ers from nongovernmental organizations, to the president's office, the White House office of health reform, the domestic policy council, the office of public engagement, key staff at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, all 535 congressional offices, and key committees and leadership offices.

Nelson Fabian, our executive director, and Larry Marcum, our government affairs manager, both are to be recognized and commended for their vigilance in this area and keeping NEHA at the forefront of important national policy issues that affect the health of the communities that we serve.

Throughout my tenure as NEHA president, I have emphasized the importance of confronting issues and circumstances that affect our profession and the communities we support. This is just one example of how we keep engaged as we *LEAN FORWARD!* 🐘

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