



## *The State of Public Health In Alaska*

Years of cuts to vital public health programs and agencies on both the federal and state levels have taken their toll and further complicate our efforts to support ongoing disease and injury prevention activities and to ensure we are prepared for an infectious disease outbreak, or other public health emergency. The current Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill, which funds most federal public health programs, contains increased funding levels for many of these programs for the first time in recent years.

- Alaska spent \$482 per capita on public health programs in 2006, an increase from \$443 in 2004; as a result, public health spending in Alaska is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the nation. However, health care quality is still rated “low” compared to other state health departments, and costs are expensive.
- 17.7% of Alaskans lack health insurance, a percentage that has been increasing since 2004.
- The prevalence of obesity in Alaska has almost doubled since 1990 to 27.4% of the population; currently, Alaska is far above the national average, ranking 42<sup>nd</sup>.
- Infant mortality rates and the prevalence of infectious disease have fallen steadily since 1990; there were 92.2 cases of infectious disease per 100,000-population in 1990, and in 2006 only 14.4.
- Increased funding since 1990 has catapulted Alaska from one of the very lowest-ranking states overall to 31<sup>st</sup> in the nation in 2006; continued funding will help push Alaska above the average.

Sources: *America's Health Rankings, 2005 Edition: A Call to Action for People & Their Communities*; *Trust for America's Health The State of Your Health Report, 2006 Edition*; *The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts*.

In response to an informal electronic survey sent out to our membership and 53 state affiliates:

***A Local Public Health Worker told us: “Bioterrorism funding and HRSA grants were supposed to build infrastructure for public health. They have sapped the core functions and imposed additional duties on all staff in all programs. The public health nursing shortage is desperate. I think the situation is worse than dire.”***

***Another Public Health Worker at a county health department described: “Additional cuts may cause us to continue to reduce the number of clients served even though the need exceeds current funding levels. Additionally, I anticipate having to reduce at least one or two positions hours to part-time. As the under and uninsured continue to grow, services are being reduced. The disparity between the insured and under/uninsured continues to grow. More funds need to be placed toward preventative health care not less.”***

*Founded in 1872, APHA is the oldest, largest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world. The association aims to protect all Americans and their communities from preventable, serious health threats and strives to assure community-based health promotion and disease prevention activities and preventive health services are universally accessible in the United States. [www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org).*