



# What's New at the American Public Health Association Student Assembly April 2005

## The Action Committee Has a New Co-Chair

Greg Summerville has teamed up with me Kate Maggioncalda to chair the Action Committee. Greg attends UNC Chapel Hill, and will be interning in Washington, D.C. this summer at the American College of Preventative Medicine. Welcome Greg!

## APHA Action Alerts!

Interested in advocacy, but feeling a little intimidated? That's understandable. Going up in front of members of Congress can be a little scary. However, there are other ways to engage in advocacy without having to make an expensive trip to Washington, D.C. Advocacy can occur at any level of government--local, state or federal--and can include making phone calls and writing letters too.

In fact, the majority of correspondence Congressional members receive are e-mails. By sending an e-mail, you can provide a brief indication of your interest, *and*, according to a former legislative aide, when an office receives 5 emails on the same issue, the legislator is informed. All it takes is 5! To make things even simpler, as part of APHA's Web site, it is now possible to electronically sign a form letter that gets sent to your legislators! Please visit: <http://www.capwiz.com/apha/issues/> where you can find information about who your legislators are, and what public health bills are currently being considered in Congress.

The Web site also provides information for making phone calls and writing/e-mailing on your own letters. For example, the APHA provides the following tips for writing letters: Your purpose for writing should be stated in the first paragraph of the letter. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g., House bill: H. R. \_\_\_\_, Senate bill: S. \_\_\_\_\_. Second, be courteous, to the point, and include key information, using examples to support your position, which can include voting in favor of health related legislation in the past. Third, address only one issue in each letter; and, if possible, keep the letter to one page. Finally, when filling out the address, indicate either the House of Representatives or U.S. Senate. For example, The Honorable (full name) \_\_ (Rm.#) \_\_ (name of) Senate Office Building United States Senate Washington, DC 20510.

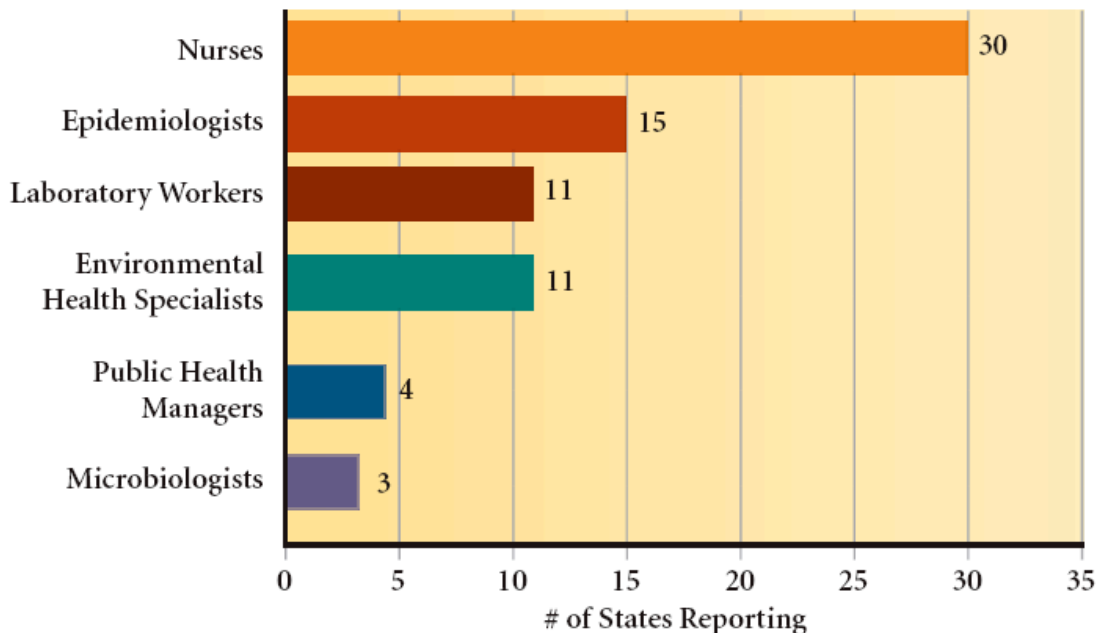


## The Public Health Preparedness Workforce Development Act of 2004 Could Pay for Your Education

This March, Senators Chuck Hagel (R-NE) and Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) introduced the Public Health Preparedness Workforce Development Act of 2005, S. 506. If passed, the legislation would provide for scholarships and loan repayments for public health students (<http://www.apha.org/legislative/legislative/letters/workfoce.html>).

The bill is in response to forecasted shortages of available public health workers who work at the federal, state or local level, due to individuals leaving jobs for higher pay, retirement, or new careers altogether, particularly in the fields of epidemiology, laboratory science, and public health nursing (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf> p. 2, 7).

The report went on to highlight that the severest shortages will be at the state level, and will drastically affect our country's preparedness for public health emergencies by 2006. In 2002, 13 states did not employ properly trained scientists to head labs, while 23 employed 1; 2 are needed for "emergency readiness" (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf> p9). The following (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf> p. 8) shows the areas with the largest cuts at the state level:





Forty two percent of state employed epidemiologists were not academically trained, and (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf p. 2>) furthermore, the participation of environmental health professionals is vital when the U.S. faces major threats like cryptosporidium, hantavirus, West Nile virus, SARS, and bio/agro-terrorism (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf p10>).

The ASTHO, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials reported the following factors as causes of this shortage: “rapidly aging public health workforce and shrinking labor pool; high percentage of the public health workforce is eligible for retirement; chronic shortages in areas like public health nursing, epidemiology, laboratory science and environmental health; and high turnover rates in states (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf p4>). The ASTHO further reported half of all states who responded indicated shortages due to lack of qualifications, and unwillingness to relocate (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf p. 2>). Jobs in the public sector are not known to be high paying, and the Association of Public Health laboratories maintain that major barrier is unwillingness to work in the public sector (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf p9>), and those working at state levels face low pay and little chance for advancement (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf p10>).

Earlier Congress granted \$146 million to provide pay for lab staff working at state levels. However states maintain applicants are not trained properly, and the incentive failed (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf p9>). To help, various states are trying to provide incentives like increasing pay and benefits; offering flexible work schedules and telecommuting opportunities; and provide professional training (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf p10>). These incentives sound good, but in light of the fact that 45 states are dealing with budget crises it is difficult to imagine them providing increased pay and benefits without federal assistance (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforceShortageReportFinal.pdf p10>).

In light of these difficulties, Congress might take action again, this time, with the PHPWD Act of 2005. If passed, it will provide scholarships for students pursuing public health careers, and provide for loan repayments in exchange for serving in an underserved area (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/HagelDurbinnewsrelease.pdf>). Specifically, the Act will provide \$35 million per year for scholarships, and \$195 million per year for loan repayments. (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/HagelDurbinnewsrelease.pdf>). Eighty percent will be directed to encourage people to work at the local and state levels; and allows for bonus payments for those who will serve in underserved areas for three years (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/HagelDurbinnewsrelease.pdf>, <http://www.astho.org/pubs/WorkforcebillS2613.pdf p. 6>).



Students who are eligible for scholarships must be US citizens, both part time/full time students are eligible, the school must be accredited, the degree or certificate earned must be for a health profession: laboratory sciences, epidemiology, environmental health, health communications, information sciences, and public administration (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/FactSheetwithDearColleague.pdf>).

Those who qualify for loan repayments can either be full/part time students, but must be in their final year of study, and have arranged to work at a federal, state or local level public health facility. Those who have graduated in the last decade and are also employed by a public health facility at the federal, state or local level are eligible (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/FactSheetwithDearColleague.pdf>). The program will cover up to \$35,000 or for those whose loans are less than \$105,000 the program will cover up to one third of the balance per year (<http://www.astho.org/pubs/Workforcebills2613.pdf> p. 7). I urge you to ask your legislators to support this bill!

## **Announcements:**

### **Harvard Health Disparities symposium - free web cast on May 5<sup>th</sup>**

"Making Disparities Count: From Government Statistics Systems to Action," Thursday, May 5, 2:00 - 5:00 pm EST, at the Harvard Conference Center, 77 Avenue Louis Pasteur, Boston, is free and open to the public and the Harvard community. Moderated by Nancy Krieger, PhD, HSPH Associate Professor. This program will be web cast live and is accessed on May 5 at [www.hsph.harvard.edu/disparities](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/disparities). (Click on web cast. Arrive in advance of the time to download Quick Time.)

Speakers include John Fox, PhD, Director of Customer and Stakeholder Engagement, NHS Health & Social Care Information Centre, United Kingdom; Eduardo Mota, MD, MPH, Chief of Health Statistics, Instituto de Saúde Coltiva, Brazil; François Héran, PhD, Director, Institute national d'études démographiques, France; Vickie Mays, PhD, Professor of Psychology, University of California-Los Angeles. Discussant is Godfrey Woelk, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, College of Health Sciences, University of Zimbabwe. Sponsored by the HSPH Working Group on Health Disparities. Info: 617-432-3056, [hlthdisp@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:hlthdisp@hsph.harvard.edu).



## **American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Exposition**

Will be held in New Orleans, LA this year, November 5-9; the theme this year is ‘Evidenced Based Policy and Practice’, and this is a great networking and learning opportunity for students of public health. Registration begins June 1, 2005. For more information please visit <http://www.apha.org> and click on Annual Meeting.

## **New Student Assembly Web site!**

Towards the end of the summer, the APHA-SA will present a new face; our website will be up to date, and the Action Committee will have a discussion board where members can share their thoughts and ideas about current public health policies.

## **Call for Articles!**

We want to know what you’re interested in! APHA-SA members are welcome to submit articles to me, Kate Maggioncalda via email by the 20<sup>th</sup> of every month ([kem2108@columbia.edu](mailto:kem2108@columbia.edu)). The article can be about any health policy issue occurring at any level of government; local, state or federal. Help others learn about what’s going on in your area! I would like to thank those who already submitted articles!