

Washington--Representatives Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), **Lee Terry (R-NE)**, and Edolphus Towns (D-NY) today introduced legislation that invests in and supports our nation's public health infrastructure. The

Strengthening America's Public Health System Act

helps states and municipalities create new jobs in the public health field, analyze local public health problems, and take prompt action to address them.

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"Our public health system has greatly improved since the mid-1990s, but is struggling to keep pace with the many threats families face on a daily basis," said Rep. Baldwin. "The current salmonella outbreak is just one reminder of how difficult it is to ensure the safety of our food, air, and water, and to prevent and control disease outbreaks. We must provide our public health personnel with all the tools they need to keep people safe," Baldwin said

"This is an extremely important bill. Today local public health departments must confront increased disease outbreaks, emerging infections, pandemic flu and environmental health threats," said Rep. Terry. "University of Nebraska Medical Center played an integral part in creating this legislation that will enhance the nation's public health capacity by strengthening its core science infrastructure and ensuring a seamless, rapid flow of information. This bill will help us meet the serious public health challenges of today and tomorrow."

"I have long been an advocate of protecting our public's health and this piece of legislation will undoubtedly aid and sustain in these efforts," Rep. Towns said. "Additionally, from an economic standpoint, the legislation will create much needed jobs. With the recent economic downturn affecting our entire country, and particularly New York, it is not only prudent but it is imperative for me to champion legislation that will revive our job market," said Rep. Towns.

The legislation enhances existing programs at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to help public health institutions identify and monitor the occurrence of infectious and other diseases of public health concern, track the effects of contaminated food and water, and address other public health issues. It will provide the funding necessary to hire and train professional staff to improve the detection of new and emerging infectious disease threats. With improved capacity,

public health labs will be better able to detect anti-microbial resistant infections and identify and respond to disease outbreaks.

The bill will also improve electronic disease reporting by state and local health departments and public health laboratories, and provide for advanced training for key elements of the public health workforce. The bill authorizes, for the first time, a process for determining a list of diseases and conditions to be reported to federal, state, or local health officials.

Frances Pouch Downes, President of American Public Health Laboratories, expressed her gratitude for the efforts of Representatives Baldwin, Terry, and Towns. "This bill 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 Downes.

"We applaud the leadership of Representatives Baldwin, Terry, and Towns on this critical piece of public health legislation," added Patrick McConnon, MPH; Executive Director, Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. "This bill will enhance critical public health infrastructure that will strengthen local-state-federal disease surveillance and reporting capacity. These improvements will help to meet the serious challenges ahead, such as emerging infections, growing antimicrobial resistance, and increased food borne disease outbreaks," McConnon said.

The bill has been endorsed by, among others, the American Public Health Association, Association for Professionals in Infection Control & Epidemiology, Association of Public Health Laboratories, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, National Association of County and City Health Officials, Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, Infectious Diseases Society of America, National Association of State and Territorial AIDS Directors.

