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PHS Commissioned Officers Association Welcomes Confirmation of Surgeon General Carmona

The Commissioned Officers Association (COA) of the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) welcomes Senate confirmation of Richard Carmona, M.D. as the 17th Surgeon General of the United States. The Surgeon General is the foremost health spokesperson for the federal government and the uniformed leader of the PHS Commissioned Corps.

The PHS has eagerly anticipated confirmation of a new Surgeon General since the departure of VADM David Satcher as Surgeon General in February. "These are critical times for the nation and the Public Health Service," said COA Executive Director, retired Navy CAPT Jerry Farrell, "we are certainly grateful for the prompt action of both the President and the Senate to nominate and confirm an individual with Dr. Carmona's public health credentials and evident leadership ability." Noting that Surgeon General Carmona's confirmation comes during the same week the U.S. Public Health Service was established in 1798, Farrell went on to comment that COA hopes Dr. Carmona will be a vocal advocate for reinstating the Surgeon General's line authority over the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. "Never before in our nation's history have we had a more urgent need for a unified, credible corps of public health professionals, serving in uniform and dedicated to safeguarding our nation's health from disease and disaster – naturally occurring or manmade."

PHS officers, domestic warriors and largely unsung heroes, have been on the frontlines in the war against terrorism since last fall's attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon and subsequent anthrax attacks. The PHS Commissioned Corps deployed almost 1000 officers – 17% of its total strength, in response to those incidents and remains fully engaged in improving the nation's ability to respond to mass casualty situations including acts of bioterrorism. PHS officers also serve in a variety of other assignments, wherever there is a need for their specialized skills. Officers are stationed in all 50 states, at more than 500 locations including remote Indian reservations and Federal prisons. Corps officers serve in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Coast Guard, and other agencies, as well as in international assignments.

The PHS Commissioned Corps is positioned to play an increased role in protecting the national public health. Key to this renewed role is restoring a measure of line authority over the Commissioned Corps to the Surgeon General and organizational changes within the Department of Health and Human Services to facilitate the emerging new roles for PHS officers. COA extends its full support to Surgeon General Carmona as he takes on his new position and addresses these important issues.

The COA is a private, professional association comprised of active duty, reserve, and retired members of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service.

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