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APHA Voices Support for Common Ground on Professional Integrity

Washington, D.C., May 20, 2009 – The American Public Health Association (APHA) joins other leading professional associations and unions in voicing support for common ground on professional integrity.

As the representative of more than 50,000 health professionals across the nation, APHA has long recognized the importance of integrity to the field of public health. Not only does this include the personal integrity that guides professional conduct, but also the integrity that equates to a commitment to the profession.

The latter has led APHA to stress the importance of insulating professional decisions from political influence, personal bias or other factors that may hinder a health professional from capably performing his/her job.

In 2003, APHA passed a policy entitled “Ensuring the Scientific Credibility of Government Public Health Advisory Committees,” which stressed the importance of scientific integrity. This year, the Association also commended President Obama for releasing a memorandum highlighting the importance of insulating the federal government’s scientific decisions from political influence. The memorandum directed the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a strategy for restoring scientific integrity to government decision-making.

Among other goals, the memo aims to ensure that political officials do not suppress or alter scientific findings, that scientists and technology professionals hired by the executive branch are well-qualified, and that each agency has appropriate rules and procedures in place to ensure the integrity of the scientific process.

“As we seek ways to best protect and promote health in our nation, it is essential that politics doesn’t serve as a barrier to our goals,” said Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (E), executive director of the American Public Health Association. “A renewed emphasis on professional integrity will go a long way in restoring the independence of researchers in the federal government, as well as ensuring that our nation has accurate findings upon which to base policy decisions.”

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APHA is the oldest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world and has been working to improve public health since 1872. The Association aims to protect all Americans, their families 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. APHA represents a broad array of health professionals and others who care about their own health and the health of their communities. More information is available at www.apha.org.