

A special THANKS to those of you contacted your legislators during the budgetary ax-wielding process. The health budgets finally approved are a far cry from the two black grants originally proposed by the Administration. Your individual and collective voices were heard. The rape of the Clean Air Act is still on the agenda, so continue to make your protestations known to appropriate legislators. Don't leave it to the other person!

The Republican Party Platform stressed the importance of disease prevention and health promotion. President Reagan has pronounced disease prevention *and* health promotion as a priority. Health and Human Services Secretary Richard Schweiker has repeatedly articulated his support for disease prevention and health promotion, and has stated that he'd "like to be known as the person who put 'preventive health care and preventive medicine' at the top of the federal health agenda." The net effect of these public statements has been significant funding reductions for such important prevention and promotion programs as the 314(d) incentive grant program, rodent control, water fluoridation, hypertension, air pollution control, immunization, family planning, radiation effects research, venereal disease control, genetic research, OSHA enforcement, lead based paint poison control, water pollution control, hazardous waste control, environmental protection research, and health education - risk reduction, - to name a few.

The block grants used to reduce some of these are tactical weapons, with the states handing out the bad news. This has been aptly described as "shifting the shaft." The Administration has now admitted what we earlier surmised - the block grants are an entering wedge in a scheme to shrink and then eliminate federal support for many of the federal health programs. Optimists suggest more can be done for less, but it is more likely that less will be done for less.

Now, after his earlier statements supporting disease prevention and health promotion, Secretary Schweiker has been subdued into recommending that the federal contributions to disease prevention and health promotion be limited to research funds and seed money to initiate private efforts.

Many of us old-time public healthers have never lost sight of the need for prevention, the value of prevention, and the cost-benefit desirability of prevention. We have watched with frustration and dismay while staggering billions have been poured into the sickness treatment system of our communities, states, and nation, with unsatisfactory (though expensive) attendant impact on the health status of *our* citizens. It was erroneously concluded that treating health problems was alone sufficient to improve the health status of our citizens.

Our citizens are finally recognizing that we must stop expecting medicine to bail us out from the consequences of our own foolishness, and that we must stop waiting for tragedy before taking action.

Prevention programs, unlike treatment and rehabilitation programs, have lacked a constituency. Prevention has always been a rocky road and this continues to be the case, because in the eyes of many people it provides no immediate gratification or feed-back. It does require the ability to look to the future. Prevention, thus far, lacks the glamour commonly associated with physicians and hospitals, diagnosis and treatment, and therefore does not compete well with sickness treatment and crisis medicine.

Surveys continue to indicate that more than 90 percent of our citizens agree that if we Americans lived healthier lives, ate more nutritious food, ceased smoking, decreased consumption of alcohol, maintained proper weight, and exercised regularly, it would do more to improve our health than anything doctors and medicine could do for us.

It is rewarding to note that many businesses and industries are beginning to be involved in limited efforts to prevent disease and promote health. Companies must learn that such services can be fiscally desirable.

The importance of disease prevention and health promotion requires the involvement of all aspects of our society. There's room for everyone!