



**Strategies To Overcome And Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance Proposes Plan To Address The State Of The Union's Obesity Crisis
January 24, 2008**

As the nation anticipates the president's annual State of the Union address -- which will undoubtedly focus on issues ranging from the economy, to national security, to healthcare -- the Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance released new policy recommendations regarding an issue that relates to each of these topics: America's obesity epidemic. The Alliance is a collaboration of consumer, provider, business, labor, government, health insurance, and quality-of-care organizations.

"Obesity is no longer an isolated problem," said Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, 17th Surgeon General of the United States (2002-2006), vice chairman of Canyon Ranch, president of the non-profit Canyon Ranch Institute, distinguished professor at the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health at the University of Arizona, and Health and Wellness Chairperson for the Alliance Steering Committee. "Obesity impacts every aspect of our lives, including business productivity, national security, and the future of our healthcare system. Today, the obesity epidemic is exacting an enormous financial and human toll. We must focus critical thinking and innovative, multi-sector approaches on addressing the obesity epidemic. Only then will we improve our nation's overall health and prevent diseases such as diabetes and heart disease that cause tremendous suffering and early death throughout our nation."

Dr. Carmona noted that the Alliance's new recommendations provide an important perspective about combating adult obesity and reflect input from a diverse Steering Committee representing many sectors of American society.

The Alliance's policy recommendations focus on four key areas where both the private and public sectors can impact the nation's ongoing struggle.

1. Redefining Success: A growing body of evidence suggests that losing between five to 10 percent of current weight leads to major health improvements, including decreasing risks for diabetes and heart disease. However, there is no shared, evidence-based definition of what constitutes successful weight loss, leaving the field open to interpretation. The STOP Obesity Alliance recommends promoting the use of a sustained loss of five to 10 percent of current weight as a key measure to judge the effectiveness of weight-reduction interventions.

2. Encouraging Innovation and Best Practices in Obesity Treatment: The Alliance recommends innovative approaches for obesity treatment, intervention, and disease management for patients who have been unsuccessful with traditional nutrition and exercise only programs. Currently, individual programs rarely leverage possible best practice models that combine multiple interventions, such as diet, exercise, medication, and behavioral treatment.

3. Addressing and Reducing Stigma as a Barrier to Obesity Treatment: No evidence suggests that stigmatizing overweight and obese individuals is a motivator for losing weight. The Alliance recommends that healthcare professionals, government, and private entities address the issue in a way that promotes open discussion rather than isolating those who are affected. The Alliance recognizes the broader societal barriers to weight loss and promotes programs that go beyond recognizing the single role of personal responsibility.

4. Broadening the Research Agenda for Obesity: Healthcare decision makers need reliable information to assess the relative value of preventing and reducing obesity. The Alliance recommends a broadened research agenda that examines all of the important factors contributing to the obesity epidemic and how they interact with each other, as well as applied research to address the immediate needs of payers, providers, individuals and others on the front lines.

"Our overweight and obese state of the union demands smart solutions," said Christine Ferguson, J.D., P.I., and the director of the STOP Obesity Alliance. "The STOP Obesity Alliance's policy recommendations are designed to leverage the combined influence of consumers, providers, businesses, labor, government, health insurance and quality-of-care organizations to provide the kind of dynamic thinking that will help us change the shape of the union."

For a full copy of the STOP Obesity Alliance policy recommendations and additional information, visit <http://www.stopobesityalliance.org>.

About the STOP Obesity Alliance

The STOP Obesity Alliance is directed by Associate Professor Christine Ferguson, J.D., P.I. of The George Washington University's Department of Health Policy and former Health Commissioner for the State of Massachusetts. The Alliance Steering Committee is comprised of the following public and private sector organizations: the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, America's Health Insurance Plans, American Medical Group Association, CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO), DMAA: The Care Continuum Alliance, National Business Group on Health, National Committee for Quality Assurance, National Quality Forum, The Obesity Society, Trust for America's Health, and the Service Employees International Union. The Alliance is sponsored by sanofi-aventis U.S. LLC, a world leader in the pharmaceutical industry with a commitment to improving public health and a heritage in therapeutic areas including cardiovascular and metabolic diseases.