

February 26, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

We are writing to urge your support for **H.R. 903, the Dental Emergency Responder Act**. This legislation would incorporate dentistry by name into the Federal disaster response framework. It calls for no new federal money and poses no new restrictions on monies now being spent.

Dentists and allied dental personnel are willing to support the medical and public health response to disasters and, with minimal additional training, could readily fit into an all-hazards emergency health care paradigm. Dentists receive a sound general medical background during their professional education. Most dental facilities can also be used as outpatient surgery centers and pharmaceutical storage and distribution sites for overwhelmed hospital facilities.

Unfortunately, many public disaster response policies, plans, and programs have yet to identify a role for dentists beyond victim identification and administrative support. In some cases, dentists have not been allowed to take patient medical histories despite their qualifications. Moreover, dental schools have at times been denied Federal public health and medical response training funds on the grounds that dentists are not identified by name in the Federal definitions of “public health worker” and “emergency response provider.”

The Dental Emergency Responder Act will—

- Incorporate dentists and allied dental personnel by name into the federal definitions of ‘public health worker’ and ‘emergency response provider’;
- Incorporate dental assets by name into the National Health Security Strategy and the operational plan for the National Incident Management System;
- Clarify that dental schools are eligible to apply for public health and medical response training grants under the federal Centers for Public Health Preparedness program; and
- Encourage the Department of Homeland Security’s Chief Medical Officer to engage the dental community when addressing medical and public health preparedness issues.

Our nation’s medical surge capacity will never be optimal until we capitalize on the personnel and resources of the *entire* health care workforce. We urge you to support this bill, which would give the dental community the leverage it needs to advocate for a more substantive role in the Federal disaster response framework. Should you have any questions or wish to arrange for a meeting, please contact Mr. J.P. Paluskiewicz at 202-789-5168 or paluskiewiczj@ada.org.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry
Alliance of the American Dental Association
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
American Academy of Periodontology
American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Dental Examiners

American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Orthodontists
American Association of Public Health Dentistry
American Dental Association
American Dental Education Association
American Student Dental Association
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors

Alabama Dental Association
Alaska Dental Society
Arizona Dental Association
Arkansas Academy of General Dentistry
Arkansas State Dental Association
California Dental Association
Colorado Dental Association
Connecticut State Dental Association
Delaware State Dental Society
Florida Dental Association
Georgia Dental Association
Hawaii Dental Association
Idaho State Dental Association
Illinois State Dental Society
Indiana Dental Association
Iowa Dental Association
Kansas Dental Association
Kentucky Dental Association
Louisiana Dental Association
Maine Dental Association
Maryland State Dental Association
Massachusetts Dental Society

Michigan Dental Association
Mississippi Dental Association
Montana Dental Association
Nevada Dental Association
New Hampshire Dental Society
New Mexico Dental Association
New York State Dental Association
North Carolina Dental Society
Ohio Dental Association
Oklahoma Dental Association
Oregon Dental Association
Pennsylvania Dental Association
Rhode Island Dental Association
South Carolina Dental Association
Tennessee Dental Association
Texas Dental Association
Utah Dental Association
Vermont State Dental Society
Virginia Dental Association
Washington State Dental Association
Wisconsin Dental Association
Wyoming Dental Association