



July 19, 2011

Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

As Congress continues to address the federal debt and deficit and begins debate on the FY12 federal budget, the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) would like you to consider one area of federal funding that is absolutely essential to every American – funding that protects the health and safety of millions of workers.

AIHA is fully aware of the need to address our federal deficit and balance the budget. AIHA members, professionals involved in occupational and environmental health and safety practicing industrial hygiene in industry, government, labor, academic institutions, and independent organizations, are committed to protecting the health and safety of every worker and assisting employers in addressing health and safety issues that improve the bottom line of their business.

There are two specific areas in which AIHA hopes you give serious consideration as the FY12 budget discussion takes center stage:

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

OSHA is already stretched to the limit as the agency strives to protect America's workers. In addition to efforts addressing safety and health standards and compliance assistance, the agency provides much needed compliance assistance and partial funding to the 25+ State Plans. OSHA was created 40 years ago and the value and success in saving lives and protecting workers is something in which this country can be very proud. But we still have a ways to go to ensure that every working American goes home healthy and safe at the end of the day.

At a time when this nation faces more and more competition on a global scale, we can not afford to lower our protection of America's workers or provide less assistance to employers who face the challenge of maintaining jobs in the United States.

The President has proposed a modest \$25 million increase in the OSHA FY 2012 budget. AIHA supports this increase and urges you to support the proposal. Studies have shown that expenditures on occupational health and safety create a positive return to the bottom line of employers. Protecting the health and safety of America's workers should not be debatable.

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

AIHA is greatly concerned with the President's proposed FY 2012 budget for the Department of Health and Human Services, particularly as it relates to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The President has proposed a 17% cut in the NIOSH budget, including elimination of all federal funding (\$24.3 million) for the Educational and Research Centers (ERCs), and all federal funding (\$23 million) for the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (AFF) sector.

Through the 17 university-based ERCs across the U.S., NIOSH supports graduate degree programs and research training in the occupational health and safety core areas of industrial hygiene, occupational health nursing, occupational medicine, and occupational safety. The ERCs translate scientific results in occupational safety and health into recommendations for professional practice and identify gaps in our scientific knowledge that can be addressed through advanced-graduate level research training.

Agricultural safety and health has been an important focus of NIOSH for more than 20 years. The fatality rate in this highly hazardous occupation is eight times that of the all-industry average. The AFF program, tasked by Congress in 1990 to lead the effort to prevent injuries and disease in this occupation, is an important program that provides health and safety protection for the workers who feed America.


NIOSH is the sole Federal agency responsible for conducting research, making recommendations for the prevention of work-related disease and injury based on current scientific evidence, and leading the effort to assure that there are occupational safety and health professionals trained to protect America's workers. It is important the President be made aware of the positive impact and important role and contribution these two programs play in assuring safe and healthy workplaces for America's workers.

Funding for the ERCs and the AFF sector should not be eliminated.

As Congress addresses the economic situation in the U.S. and the difficult decisions you and others must make, AIHA urges you to not allow this economic concern to keep us from protecting the health and safety of workers. Please support the modest proposal to increase spending for OSHA and preserve the existing funding for the NIOSH ERCs and the AFF program in the FY 2012 spending bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth L. Pullen, CIH
AIHA President