



*Advancing public policy to
improve the health and safety
of workers and the community.*

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President, Chris Laszcz-Davis, MS, CIH, REA
The Environmental Quality Organization, LLC
Lafayette, CA
(925) 330-1774

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(714) 220-3922

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Los Angeles, CA
(310) 794-7687

Jeff King, MSPH, CIH
SAIC
San Diego, CA 92121
(858) 826-3686

Jim Messelbeck, CIH
Environmental Health and Safety
Management Consultants
San Diego, CA
(650) 996-5080

Leo Vartouni, MPH, CIH
Newport Beach, CA
(949) 722-1153

Alternates:

Joel Cohen, MPH, CIH
The Cohen Group
San Mateo, CA
(650) 349-9737

Ann Graham, CIH
U.S. Navy
San Diego, CA
(858) 577-8925

Ronald P. Hutton, CIH, CPEA
Pacific Health and Safety, Inc.
Mission Viejo, CA
(949) 331-2732

Jaime Steedman-Lyde, CIH
Health Science Associates
Los Alamitos, CA
(714) 220-3922

Special Advisors:

Larry Gibbs, MEd, MPH, CIH
Stanford University
Palo Alto, CA
(650) 723-7403

Jackie Luca, CIH
Retired, Northrop Grumman
Manhattan Beach, CA
(310) 994-5136

Sacramento Advocacy:

Catherine Barankin
CIHC Legislative Office
Sacramento, CA
(916) 447-7341

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Attention: Chris Thompson
Hart Building, Room 331
Washington, D.C. 20510

April 11, 2010

RE: CIHC Comments on Proposed NIOSH Budget Cuts

Dear Senator Feinstein,

The California Industrial Hygiene Council (CIHC) respectfully submits the following comments regarding 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. **Our concern resides in the fact that these cuts may well negatively impact the health and safety of workers and their families in California and across the United States.**

Founded in 1990, the CIHC represents the California occupational and environmental health and safety professionals practicing industrial hygiene in industry, government, labor, academic institutions, and independent organizations. The CIHC is affiliated with the national American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), a 12,000 member national organization. Our Board consists of Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) representatives from all California local sections of the AIHA, specifically, Northern California, Orange County, Sacramento, San Diego, and Southern California. Our mission is to bring good science to the legislative and/or regulatory agenda which impacts the health of California workers and the public. It goes without saying that a healthy workforce is essential to the success of American industry, our economic recovery, and our future position in the global economy.

The President has proposed in FY 2012 a 17% cut in the NIOSH budget, including elimination of all federal funding (\$24.3 million) for the Educational and Research Centers (ERCs), and \$23 million for the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (AFF) sector.

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 aware of the positive impact and important role and contribution these two programs play in assuring safe and healthy workplaces for America's workers. Consider: ERCs – Through the 17 university-based ERCs across the U.S., NIOSH supports 87 interdisciplinary 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 have a unique mission – to translate scientific results in occupational safety and health into recommendations for professional practice and to identify gaps in our scientific knowledge that can be addressed through advanced-graduate level research training in an inter-disciplinary environment. Graduates also have access to a robust continuing education program, assuring that occupational and environmental health practitioners have access to the latest information to improve worker health and safety.

The importance of this program cannot be overstated – over 75% of the U.S. occupational safety and health professionals are trained through these centers, and over 5,000 small, medium and large-businesses are annually provided aid and consultation; yet, there remains a shortage of qualified professionals to protect workers in the coming years.

AFF – Agricultural safety and health has been an important focus of NIOSH for more than 20 years. In 1990 Congress tasked NIOSH to lead the effort to prevent injuries and disease in this highly hazardous occupation. Today, NIOSH funds 7 regional centers for agriculture disease and injury research, education and prevention. The fatality rate in agriculture (a critical industry here in California) is 8 times that of the all-industry average. More than 1 in 10 AFF workers experience nonfatal injuries each year, and this reported figure does not even include men, women, and youths on farms with fewer than 11 full-time employees. Given this poor operating experience in these dangerous workplaces, the elimination of AFF funding will very likely increase the probability of occupational injuries and illnesses to workers.

Elimination of funding for the ERCs and the AFF program would have a negative impact on worker occupational safety and health for years to come as fewer and fewer individuals would have access to this specialized training and the resultant professional expertise developed by the graduates of academic programs funded by the ERCs and AFFs. If we are to continue protecting workers in the future, we must ensure that younger professionals are technically and scientifically qualified to replace Baby Boomers who will soon be retiring.

CIHC and our members are fully aware of the economic situation in California and the United States and the difficult decisions you and others must make, not only in enacting a FY 2012 budget but in determining the appropriate spending for the remainder of the FY 2011 budget. However, we must not allow this economic concern to keep us from protecting the health and safety of workers throughout our country. NIOSH plays an important role in this effort and continued support by Congress is needed.

CIHC urges you to preserve the existing funding for NIOSH in the FY 2011 spending bill and ensure that the ERCs and the AFF program are protected in the FY 2012 budget.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or any of our Board members with any questions you may have. CIHC stands ready to assist you and other members of Congress in any possible way.

Sincerely,

Chris Laszcz-Davis

Chris Laszcz-Davis, MS, CIH, REA, President
California Industrial Hygiene Council (CIHC)