



Date: April 3, 2009

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Media Briefing: Oregon legislators challenged to kick off National Public Health Week with a “State Walk for the Public’s Health” to encourage physical activity

Background: Oregon is falling behind neighboring states California and Washington in its rates of obesity. With two-thirds of the population considered overweight or obese, the upcoming generation of children may be the first in decades to have a shorter lifespan than their parents – due to the prevalence of diabetes, obesity and other potentially preventable diseases.

What: Senator Ginny Burdick challenges all 90 Oregon legislators to collectively walk the length and width of the state of Oregon during National Public Health Week. The challenge is being issued to raise awareness about public health and environments that encourage or discourage walking. Oregon is approximately 295 miles long and 395 miles wide. To reach this goal, each legislator would have to walk approximately 7.7 miles from April 6 – 10. Northwest Health Foundation will provide pedometers to use throughout the week’s challenge. Legislators will be encouraged to report their “mileage” daily during public health week on the Web site of Community Health Priorities, www.communityhealthpriorities.org (a Northwest Health Foundation project).

When: Monday, April 6, at noon (approximately)

Where: Capitol steps, Oregon State Capitol, Salem, OR.

Who: State and local officials including:

- Senator Ginny Burdick and other members of the legislative assembly

- Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., acting state public health director, Oregon Public Health Division, Department of Human Services
- Jim Hill, chairman of the board of the Northwest Health Foundation, former state treasurer and former state legislator

Details: Following brief remarks by officials, there will be a one-mile walk through “built environments” near the State Capitol that may discourage walking due to street safety concerns, lack of sidewalks, and other obstacles.

Media opportunities: Photograph and film the walk, view examples of built environments that encourage and/or discourage walking, interview legislators, government officials, partners and community members and participate in a “walking press conference.”

[Note: Walk will occur rain or shine. In the event of rain, speaker’s kick-off will be held inside the Capitol in the galleria space.]