



**National Center for
Healthy Housing**

ALLIANCE FOR HEALTHY HOMES
Protecting Children from Lead and Other Environmental Health Hazards

For Immediate Release

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Senators Jack Reed and Chuck Hagel Introduce Bill to Create Council on Healthy Housing

March 10, 2008—Washington, DC. Today, Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Chuck Hagel (R-NE) announced legislation creating the first Council on Healthy Housing, which would bring together Federal, State, and local government representatives, as well as industry and non-profit representatives.

The bill authorizes \$750,000 for each of the next five years for the Council to review, monitor, and evaluate existing housing, health, energy, and environmental programs and to make recommendations for reducing duplication, ensuring collaboration, identifying best practices, and developing a comprehensive healthy housing research agenda. The Council will submit an annual report to Congress outlining agency actions on healthy housing, as well as research, policy/program, and funding recommendations.

"The Healthy Housing Council Act will help us ensure that an affordable, decent, and healthy home is not just the American dream, but the American promise," said Reed. "We need to bring together health and housing experts to improve the coordination of existing but fragmented programs, so that families can access government services in a more efficient and effective manner."

Residents of housing that is poorly designed, constructed, or maintained are at risk for cancer, injuries, childhood lead poisoning, and asthma. Children and the elderly are particularly at risk. Providing healthier housing in the United States will help prevent an estimated 240,000 elevated blood lead levels, 18,000 unintentional injury deaths, and 2,000,000 emergency room visits for asthma.

"In the year 2008, it is inconceivable that 6 million families in the United States live in unsafe housing," said Rebecca Morley, executive director of the National Center for Healthy Housing. "Addressing poor quality housing and detrimental neighborhood conditions must be a high priority if we are to narrow the health disparities gap and reduce soaring medical costs."

"This bill takes a significant step forward toward creating the national infrastructure to eliminate health hazards in housing," stated Alliance for Healthy Homes' executive director, Patrick MacRoy. "Only by convening such a leadership team will federal, state and local governments, along with advocates and industry, be able to succeed in protecting families from housing-based health hazards."

Members of the Council will include the Agency heads of the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Departments of Energy, Labor, Veterans Affairs, Treasury, Agriculture, and Labor. Six members of the Council will represent state or local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and for-profit organizations.

For the complete bill text and additional background information visit:
http://www.nchh.org/html/healthy_housing_bill.htm or www.afhh.org

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The Alliance for Healthy Homes is the national, nonprofit public interest organization advocating for practical, affordable policy solutions and working to build community capacity to prevent housing-related hazards from harming the health of children, their families, and other residents. The Alliance stresses the importance of fixing housing-related health hazards before they cause harm; housing that is decent, environmentally safe, and affordable for all; and holistic strategies that efficiently address multiple hazards and their underlying causes. The Alliance works closely with policy makers, community-based organizations, housing providers, government agencies, and other stakeholders. The Alliance provides strategic and technical support to community-based organizations and state and local agencies across the nation.

The National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) is the only national scientific and technical non-profit organization dedicated to creating healthy and safe homes for America's children through practical and proven steps. NCHH develops scientifically valid and practical strategies to make homes safe from hazards, to alert low-income families about housing-related health risks, and to help them protect their children. NCHH also works with governmental and non-governmental organizations to develop standards and programs and guide their implementation through insurers, lenders, federal and state laws and regulations, community organizations, and the courts.