



**Statement from Dr. Jeffrey Levi, Executive Director, Trust for American's Health
Press Event
Wednesday, November 2, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.**

Good morning. My name is Dr. Jeffrey Levi and I'm the Executive Director of Trust for America's Health or TFAH. Many thanks to Congresswoman Capps for introducing the Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Act and for giving me the opportunity to join you here today. I also wanted to thank Congressman Markey for his leadership on this issue.

TFAH is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public health advocacy organization dedicated to saving lives by making disease prevention a national priority. As you've heard (you'll hear) from all of my colleagues, we know that the changing climate has serious ramifications for our health. If the symptoms are extreme weather events, rising temperatures, and worsening air quality – the diagnosis will be an increase in climate-related illnesses and injuries such as increased rates of respiratory disease and death and the spread of certain vector and waterborne diseases.

Unfortunately, our nation is critically underprepared to address the health-related impacts of climate change. In 2009, TFAH issued a report finding the nation lacks a coordinated approach to addressing climate change issues. Three years later, a new report from the GAO concluded this is still the case.

The Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Act would move us in the right direction. It would require a National Strategic Action Plan to help health professionals prepare for and respond to climate change. Such a plan would be critical for protecting health while we protect the environment – particularly taking action to help the people most vulnerable to climate-related health problems, including infants and children, the elderly, people with underlying health conditions, individuals with lower-incomes and racial and ethnic minorities.

This legislation would also help the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention build on their important role in studying the impact of climate change on health and providing funds and technical expertise to help states and communities meet the challenges they face with this issue.

Declining state and federal budgets already mean that public health officials are overwhelmed and underfunded to meet the challenges they face. This legislation would provide much needed federal leadership and resources to address climate-related health problems, from asthma to increases in natural disasters to Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. We may be facing a challenging budget situation, but we can't afford to wait to prepare for the consequences of climate change.

Thank you again, Congresswoman Capps and Congressman Markey, for your leadership on this important issue. We look closely to working with you.

