



## The Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness

Chairman Dan Burton (R ~ IN)

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### **SUPERSIZED: CHAIRMAN BURTON TO EXAMINE INCREASING INCIDENCES OF OBESITY**

Washington, D.C. – According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey conducted in 1999 by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), it is estimated that 31% of adults over the age of 20 in the United States are obese. In addition, the data also showed that over 65% of adults in the United States were considered to be overweight, which is determined by having a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 25 or more. According to the most recent figures from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), this constitutes an estimated **129.6 million adults** who are currently living at unhealthy weight levels in the United States - increasing over **54.9 percent** in the last decade.

Congressman Dan Burton (R-IN), Chairman of the U. S. House Government Reform Subcommittee on Human Rights & Wellness, will hold an oversight hearing, entitled **“Conquering Obesity: The U.S. Approach to Combating this National Health Crisis.”** **The hearing will be held on Wednesday, September 15, 2004, in Room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building at 2:00 p.m.** The Subcommittee plans to discuss the escalating incidences of obesity in the United States, and the subsequent health and financial implications they pose. In addition, the Subcommittee will examine various government initiatives being implemented to decrease the obesity levels throughout the country.

Stated Chairman Burton, “These skyrocketing rates of obesity are damaging to both our overall health and our pocket book. It is well known that obesity puts individuals at a far greater risk to have higher blood pressure rates and cholesterol levels, suffer from a disability, and can even lead to premature death. In addition, previous studies clearly show that obesity related medical expenses cost us billions of dollars each year. It is imperative for the health and financial well-being of Americans that we find an effective way to reign-in this healthcare epidemic.”

Obesity is defined as an excessively high amount of body fat or adipose tissue in relation to lean body mass. In the United States, this is categorized as a BMI of 30 or greater. The BMI, or Body Mass Index, is a mathematical formula in which an individual’s body weight in kilograms is divided by the square of their height in meters. This measurement is considered the most accurate indicator of body fat than any other means of evaluation of height and weight.

Presently, HHS, as well as a number of independent organizations like the North American Association for the Study of Obesity, the American Obesity Society, and the Endocrine Society of America, are conducting research into the causation of obesity, including the possible genetic factors that contribute to this disease. Representatives from the various organizations have been invited to speak on their research.

A study of national costs attributed to both overweight and obesity related services, specify that medical expenses accounted for 9.1 percent of the total U.S. medical expenditures in 1998, and may have reached as high as \$78.5 billion at that time (this would equate to approximately \$92.6 billion in 2002 dollars). Approximately half of these costs were compensated for by funds allocated to Medicare and Medicaid services.

There are several programs to combat and bring awareness to obesity. The Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity at the CDC has developed a program designed specifically to help states improve their efforts to prevent obesity by promoting good nutrition and more physical activity. Currently, 20 states are enrolled in the FY 2004 activities, which are part of this program, including obesity prevention activities that provide state residents with the knowledge and skills they need to develop stronger dietary intentions and greater self-efficacy. These programs also address the need for supportive environments that provide opportunities for healthy eating and more physical activity.

### **PANEL ONE WITNESSES:**

#### **Representative**

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)  
United States Department of Health & Human Services

#### **The Honorable Eric Bost**

Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition, & Consumer Services  
United States Department of Agriculture

### **PANEL TWO WITNESSES:**

#### **Ms. Alison Krester**

Director of Scientific Nutrition Policy  
Grocery Manufacturers of America

#### **Mr. Scott Riehl**

Policy Representative  
National Food Processors Association

#### **Mr. Morgan Downey**

Executive Director  
American Obesity Association

#### **Dr. Daniel Spratt**

Director  
Reproductive Endocrinology  
Maine Medical Center  
Endocrine Society of America

#### **Dr. Thomas Wadden**

Vice-President  
North American Association of the Study of Obesity

This is the Subcommittee's first hearing focusing on the detrimental health and financial effects related to increasing incidences of obesity. For more information, or to access hearing resource materials, please visit the Subcommittee's website at [www.reform.house.gov/WHR](http://www.reform.house.gov/WHR).