

STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY
HEARING ON THE NOMINATION OF DR. RICHARD CARMONA
TO BE SURGEON GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Today, the Committee will consider the nomination of Dr. Richard Carmona to be Surgeon General of the United States.

The Surgeon General is the nation's doctor. He is our country's principal official on health care and health policy issues. The Surgeon General leads the Public Health Service and the Service's Commissioned Corps, one of the seven Uniformed Services of the United States.

This is one of the most important jobs in our national government. The Surgeon General promotes and protects the health of all Americans, whether it's providing care through the Public Health Service, addressing the threat of bioterrorism, urging our citizens to adopt healthy lifestyles and to stop smoking, or helping young mothers nourish healthy children. This position demands a person of extensive expertise and experience, who has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the public health.

Over the years, our Surgeons General have enabled millions of our fellow citizens to live longer, fuller lives. We remember Dr. David Satcher's work on mental health and against the tobacco industry, and Dr. C. Everett Koop's historic leadership on AIDS. And there's Dr. Julius Richmond's pioneering work on Head Start and, of course, Dr. Luther Terry's landmark report on smoking.

These are big shoes to fill. But today, our country needs another such champion of public health. We need a strong and independent Surgeon General who will put public health first, and leave politics and ideology well behind.

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SENATOR KENNEDY ON DR. CARMONA FOR SURGEON GENERAL 2-2-2

Dr. Carmona comes to us with an impressive background. He has taken on many important responsibilities. He is a trauma surgeon, a decorated police officer, a former health care administrator, and a former Green Beret. He is a father of three children. In addition to his heroic service in the Army and as a law enforcement officer, Dr. Carmona made his professional mark in the fields of trauma care and bioterrorism preparedness.

It is my particular hope that he will bring the same commitment and the same success he has achieved in these fields for the people of Arizona to promoting the health of our Nation – from preventing tobacco use by our children and youth, to expanding access to health care, to addressing disparities in health care among our nation's communities, to improving childhood immunization rates and to fighting the AIDS epidemic.

Dr. Carmona is supported by the National Safe Kids Campaign, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the National Hispanic Medical Association, and by Dr. Phil Lee, the distinguished former Assistant Secretary of Health.

So I welcome Dr. Carmona, and look forward to working with him closely in the days to come.