

PREPARED STATEMENT

OF JAMES W. HOLSINGER JR., MD

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS
U.S. SENATE**

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Mr. Chairman, Senator Enzi and other Members of the Committee, it is indeed an honor to appear before the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to discuss my nomination to be Surgeon General of the United States. I would also like to thank Senators McConnell and Bunning for their support.

With your permission I would be pleased to introduce some of my family members present today. I have lived my life in company with a group of remarkable women. First, Dr. Barbara Craig Holsinger and I have been married for nearly 44 years. That fact alone indicates that she is a person with exceptional stamina! We are the parents of four daughters, several of whom are able to be here today. Dr. Anna Holsinger Bampton and her husband, Dr. James Bampton, live in Richmond, VA where Jim practices family medicine. Our second daughter, Dr. Ruth Holsinger Lewellen and her family reside in New Zealand. The Reverend Sarah Holsinger-Friesen is a deacon in the United Methodist Church and her husband, Dr. Tom Holsinger-Friesen, teaches at Spring Arbor University in Michigan. Rachel Holsinger and her husband live in Lexington where she chairs the Science Department and teaches Biology at Sayre School.

As is the case with all of us, I am the product of the home in which I grew up. My father, Brig. Gen. James Holsinger, is buried in Arlington National Cemetery beside his brother, RADM Raymond Holsinger. My 98 year old mother, Ruth Holsinger, is here with us today. On June 15, 2009, the President of the United States will have the pleasure of sending her a one hundredth birthday card. My parents imbued in me a love of public service and through their example in serving the American people as a part of our greatest generation; I have attempted to live out a

life of service to all Americans. Barbara's mother, Betty Craig, is also here today. She makes every mother-in-law joke a bad one, as she considers me her oldest son.

Mr. Chairman, I am deeply honored to have been nominated for the position of Surgeon General. This is one of the most remarkable positions in our national government; a position held in deep affection by the American people; a position unique in its ability to make a difference in the lives of all Americans. The Surgeon General has the opportunity not only to make an impact on the lives of the people of the United States but on the lives of individuals around the world. Other nations have long desired to have such a position and even some of our states are in the process of creating State Surgeons General in order to provide health education to their people.

So, why would I even dream that I could fill such a position? As I look back over my 40 year career in public service, I believe that in many respects my previous positions seem to have uniquely prepared me to serve in this role. Through these various roles, I have been able to support significant improvements in public health and quality health care. I have attached a brief summary of specific work that I have accomplished. I bring to the position a deep love of public service, a lifetime of providing quality healthcare to everyone, and a passion for education. Impacting on the health of all Americans will require using all my skills and persuasion to make a difference in their lives. Public service is a high calling and the Surgeon General of the United States is held in high esteem. I believe that I can meet the challenge and proudly serve all Americans.

Should I be confirmed as Surgeon General, my major priority will be engaging in an all out fight against the obesity epidemic in America, and indeed around the world. Obesity is second only to smoking as the leading cause of death in the United States. Its impact on our children is becoming devastating and if we don't tackle the issue now its consequences will be too great to bear. Secondly, I will continue my predecessors' efforts to eliminate tobacco use in the United States. In my own state of Kentucky, we have pursued ordinances to ban smoking in restaurants and bars with minimal effect on their financial condition. Thirdly, I will focus on the readiness of the Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service to meet man-made or natural disasters, including the development of rapid response teams which will place the Public Health Service at the forefront in capability for alleviating suffering in such situations. The Public Health Service Commissioned Corps should be second-to-none in its skill in dealing with these issues in the post-9/11 and Katrina era.

Now, since my nomination on May 24, there have been several statements made about me. Questions have been raised about my faith and about my commitment to ensuring the health and welfare of all Americans, including Gay and Lesbian Americans. I am deeply troubled by these claims, which do not reflect who I am, what I believe or the work I have accomplished in over 40 years of practicing medicine. I am grateful for the opportunity to address those issues with you today. Let me be clear – I have a profound respect for the essential human dignity of all people, regardless of background or sexual orientation. Throughout my 40 year career, I have dedicated myself to serving all Americans regardless of their circumstances. I pledge to you to continue that commitment especially if I am confirmed as Surgeon General.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my opening remarks and I would be happy to respond to any questions.

Public Health Accomplishments

As Chief Medical Director/Under Secretary for Health, DVA (1990-1993):

- Established a registry for Persian Gulf veterans with health problems that may be related to their Gulf service, as well as three referral centers for special diagnostic problems related to Persian Gulf Syndrome.
- Developed and led the implementation of national guidelines for preventive medicine programs in VA Medical Centers.
- Launched a major effort to increase veterans' understanding of the hazards of smoking in an effort to decrease smoking in veterans.
- Implemented a smoke-free environment in all VA Medical Centers and Clinics nationwide.
- Opened four new Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Centers designed to develop additional understanding of the medical and social needs of elderly veterans.
- Published national infection control guidelines in an effort to reduce nosocomial infections and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
- Published the *Blueprint for Quality*, a national tool to coordinate, integrate, and streamline the quality management programs throughout all VA Medical Centers and clinics nationwide.
- Developed a physician and dentist credentialing and privileging system which was recognized and promulgated by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) as a state-of-the-art approach.
- Established the VA/DOD Contingency Planning System to provide support for Operation Desert Storm including a system of providing up to 25,000 beds for DOD usage on 72 hours notice during the ground campaign.
- Developed the first national health care plan, including preventive services, for VHA and its facilities nation-wide including prevention programs.
- Supported the development and first implementation of performance measures in the VHA, which became the foundation for culture change and improvement in the system.

International Activities:

- Led an international team of Chinese, Zimbabweans, and Americans which determined the need for and planned the development of a School of Health Sciences at Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe, including nursing and public health programs in an effort to train young men and women for combating HIV/AIDS.
- Assisted in obtaining a USAID grant to build the facility to house the School of Health Sciences at Africa University (Includes a HIV/AIDS laboratory).
- Trained Chinese academics in Public Health approaches at Szechwan University and Shandong University, PRC.

As Chancellor of the University of Kentucky Medical Center (1994-2003):

- Developed Corporate Compliance programs to ensure access to quality care for all patients requiring treatment at UK Hospital.
- Oversaw the creation of the College of Public Health at the University of Kentucky, the first new college created at the University since 1966.
- Developed and gained approval for two new public health degrees at the University of Kentucky – Master of Public Health and Doctor of Public Health.
- Developed the rationale for housing the College of Public Health on campus to facilitate a close interaction between the colleges
- Developed and implemented a PhD program in Gerontology to train scientists to address scholarly questions in the aging.
- Developed the funding for the new building to house the UK Rural Health Center in Hazard, Kentucky.
- Issued directives to make the Chandler Medical Center a non-smoking healthcare facility protecting patients from the effects of second-hand smoke.
- Directed the creation of a Women’s Health Center to study the needs of women including issues of disease prevention.

As Secretary of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (2003-2005), led many efforts to expand health care coverage and services, including:

- Chaired the Board of Get Healthy Kentucky, an initiative to address obesity, smoking and sedentary lifestyle and create a healthier population in Kentucky.
- Modernized Kentucky's Medicaid system by improving technology, care and benefit management and thus maximizing the number of individuals being cared for as well as improving the quality of care.
- Launched a strategy to improve Kentucky's insurance market by attracting more insurance carriers to the market.
- Advocated to promote exercise and improve school nutrition in Kentucky elementary schools.
- Initiated legislation to expand Kentucky's newborn screening program from four tests to the national standard of 29 tests.
- Launched a comprehensive survey on the preparedness of Kentucky communities to meet the needs of the aging baby boomer population.
- Expanded the Kentucky All Schedule Prescription Electronic Reporting (eKASPER) System to an electronic format to prevent the abuse of prescription drugs.
- Worked with the National Alliance on Mental Illness, to preserve the use of second-generation anti-psychotic medications by identifying inappropriate prescribing of the drugs to other individuals.
- Initiated the redesign of the delivery of services for people with mental retardation, other developmental disabilities and mental illness.
- Expanded the Kentucky All Schedule Prescription Electronic Reporting (eKASPER) System to an electronic format to prevent the abuse of prescription drugs.

As a Professor of Preventive Medicine and Environmental Health (2005-Present):

- Developing a Patient Safety Organization for Kentucky in cooperation with and between the Kentucky Medical Association and the Kentucky Hospital Association in an effort to provide quality and safe care to all Kentuckians.
- Assisting in development of a new residency training program in Preventive Medicine and Environmental Health.
- Assessing Kentucky certificate of need legislation and its impact on access to care.