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REPLY TO:

- 103 FEDERAL COURTHOUSE BUILDING
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- 210 WATERLOO BUILDING
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WATERLOO, IA 50701-5497
(319) 232-6657
- 131 WEST 3RD STREET
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DAVENPORT, IA 52801-1419
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- 307 FEDERAL BUILDING
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United States Senate

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501

February 16, 2006

Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

Thank you for your response to our letter dated August 16, 2005 regarding the Conference on Methamphetamine (meth), HIV, and Hepatitis held on August 19 and 20, 2005 in Utah. After reviewing the training material from the conference organizers and topics that were presented at this conference, we are outraged that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) would spend taxpayer dollars to support this event.

The chief organizers of this conference, the Harm Reduction Project, along with many of the groups presenting over the two-day event are main advocates of the concept of "harm reduction" to combat the severity of drug abuse, and the spread of HIV and Hepatitis. The concept of "harm reduction" operates on the assumption that there never has been and never will be a drug-free society. The ultimate goal is to not punish or reduce the number of people using drugs, but to make drug abuse "safer." Many groups that support this concept also support the legalization of marijuana for unproven medicinal purposes, syringe exchange programs, and reduced sentencing for drug offenders.

Though the intentions of these groups are acceptable to some, the policies and practices they advocate will actually lead to greater harm for the user and society at large. The idea of a "safe" way to use illegal and highly dangerous drugs is outrageous. One of the presentations at this conference, paid for in part with taxpayer dollars, is entitled "Tweaking Tips For Party Boys." This presentation featured a website (<http://www.tweaker.org>) devoted to homosexual and bisexual males, and gives advice on how to do meth in a "safe" way. The website illustrates the many ways in which meth can be absorbed into the bloodstream and highlights the "less riskier" methods in which to do so. The website also provides "strategies to reduce potential harms" of meth use by suggesting the user drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and to regularly brush and floss to avoid "meth mouth" as a few examples. The site further provides highly dangerous advice in providing tips to have "safe, condomless sex" to avoid contracting HIV. Such ideas and behavior will neither reduce meth abuse nor will it slow or halt the spread of HIV and Hepatitis and may actually encourage riskier practices.

Committee Assignments:

CHAIRMAN,
FINANCE

BUDGET
JUDICIARY
AGRICULTURE

CHAIRMAN,
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL CAUCUS

Meth abuse is a serious and growing problem throughout the nation, and it is absolutely appalling that HHS would support a conference that is stacked full of groups that advocate condomless sex, as well as "less riskier ways" to do destructive drugs . The ideas and behaviors presented at this conference were not consistent with the mission of HHS. In our opinion, it was completely irresponsible and a waste of taxpayer money.

Congress is currently working to address the meth crisis, and we believe that the federal government should do everything it can to prevent meth abuse, and care for those who suffer from its effects. We believe HHS has and will continue to help in this effort, but it is imperative that we remain focused on a unified message of prevention and treatment not "harm reduction."

In case you were unaware of what some of the supporters of the Salt Lake City conference were advocating, we encourage you to visit the following websites of groups that were listed as sponsors or cosponsors with HHS for this conference: <http://www.harmredux.org>, <http://www.drugpolicy.org>, and <http://www.nasen.org>.

In an effort to better understand HHS' support for "harm reduction", we ask that you provide to us the following by March 24, 2006.

- (1) Further information on the support of the Salt Lake City Conference as to the dollar amount that was spent to get HHS listed as a sponsor along with the name of the HHS employee who approved said sponsorship, as well as the total cost of travel and expenses for all who attended on behalf of HHS including but not limited to employees, detailees, and fellows.
- (2) A complete and detailed list of conferences between 2002 - 2005 in which HHS sponsored or lent support to where "harm reduction" or the decriminalizing of scheduled drugs was advocated; and
- (3) A list of names and titles of all HHS employees along with detailees or fellows who attended, participated, and or presented at these conferences, and what if any presentation was made on behalf on HHS if applicable.

Thank you for attention to this matter. If you have any questions please contact David Bleich of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control at 202-228-0927. We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Chuck Grassley Tom U. Cole

Jim Telfer