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Arkansas Surgeon General, Dr. Joe Thompson, Joins Campaign to End Obesity Board of Directors

The Campaign to End Obesity announced the addition of Dr. Joe Thompson to its Board of Directors. Thompson brings significant expertise from both clinical and policy perspectives as Surgeon General for the State of Arkansas, Director of the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) and Director of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity (RWJF Center).

“Dr. Thompson has been a tireless advocate and pioneer in advancing health policy, research activities and collaborative anti-obesity programs that promote better health both in Arkansas and nationally,” said Penny Lee, Executive Director of the Campaign to End Obesity. “His work at the state level is a model that should be applauded on a national scale, and the Campaign is proud to include him on our Board of prestigious leaders from industry, academia, public health and associations.”

“As rates of obesity continue to climb, experts warn that today’s young people may be the first generation in our nation’s history to live sicker and die younger than their parents’ generation,” said Dr. Thompson. “And now, new reports have indicated that nearly 17 percent of U.S. medical costs can be attributed to obesity — twice the impact on medical spending as previously estimated. Our families deserve better, and I am pleased to join the Campaign in the critical fight to reverse this dangerous epidemic.”

Obesity is linked to more than 60 chronic and often life-threatening diseases —ranging from heart disease, diabetes, osteoarthritis, stroke, dementia and even many forms of cancer. Recent reports indicate that 2009 obesity rates exceeded 30 percent in nine states across the country, as opposed to only three states in 2007.

In addition to his service to the state, ACHI and the RWJF Center, Dr. Thompson is Professor in the Colleges of Medicine and Public Health at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and a practicing general pediatrician at Arkansas Children’s Hospital. Under Dr. Thompson’s leadership ACHI supports Arkansas’ effort to collect and report to parents the body mass index (BMI) for public school students as part of an initiative to combat childhood obesity.

Additionally, Dr. Thompson served as the RWJF Clinical Scholar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Luther Terry Fellow in Preventive Medicine advising the U.S.

Assistant Secretary of Health in Washington, D.C., and the assistant vice president and director of research at the National Committee for Quality Assurance in Washington, D.C. He earned his medical degree from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and Master of Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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About the Campaign

The Campaign to End Obesity is dedicated to reversing America's costliest disease. Ending this epidemic requires change – in individuals, institutions and communities. The Campaign convenes leaders from industry, academia, public health and associations to speak with one voice for federal policies to reverse the obesity epidemic and promote healthy weight in children and adults.