

**AMERICAN ACADEMY OF HEALTH BEHAVIOR  
PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT- 2011 CONFERENCE SITE  
(6-22-10)**

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to notify you that that the American Academy of Health Behavior Board of Directors has voted to initiate steps to relocate the 2011 conference from Tucson, AZ.

This decision was not reached easily and it was made with considerable debate and ambivalence. Over the past month, I have received well over 125 emails and had numerous telephone conversations with a broad array of members, non-members who regularly attend our conference, and 2011 conference speakers. The main conclusion I drew from this correspondence is that people are deeply divided about the topic of relocation. This divide cuts across all stakeholder groups, including AAHB's Board. Although there was a clear majority vote for this decision, it was not unanimously endorsed.

I realize some will interpret this decision as moving the Academy toward an advocacy organization. At one level, this viewpoint is inherently accurate given the circumstances. However, in reality, my recommendation to the board and their endorsement of relocation was based on much more pragmatic considerations.

It was clear that the large majority of people who said they would consider attending the conference in Arizona would only do so if the conference included a strong and salient policy/advocacy component as a center piece. It is my strong belief that a failure to make a strong statement as part of our conference would have motivated several conference speakers to re-evaluate their participation, and jeopardized conference attendance.

Thus, either decision would move the Academy away from its fundamental foundation- which is data-driven science and rigorous scientific methodology. Given the excellent conference program on Community-Based Participatory Research that has been put together by Dr. Lisa Benz-Scott and her committee, we do not want the scientific merit of this program lost in advocacy and policy debates. It is my sincere hope that moving the conference to a less emotionally charged environment will allow conference attendees the greatest opportunity to focus on the scientific meritocracy of the program and its high quality panel of speakers.

I accept that some will endorse this decision while others will critique it. The same would be true if we chose to remain in Tucson. I respect everyone's opinion on this issue. It was a decision that had many pros and cons for both sides and one in which there was no clear consensus.

As an organization, I hope we can put this behind us and move forward with renewed focus on the strength of AAHB's mission-

To serve as the research home for health behavior scholars and researchers whose primary commitment is to excellence in research and the application of research to practice to improve the public's health.

I am committed to maintaining this core foundation of the Academy at our conferences. I believe relocation offers the best opportunity to host a conference focused on science, not policy and advocacy.

We are committed to maintaining the same conference dates (March 20-23, 2011). We are actively exploring alternative locations, including other Southwest sites (Santa Fe, San Antonio). We will provide additional details about the conference in the near future.

Please do not hesitate to contact me about this decision.

Respectfully,

David W. Seal, Ph.D.  
AAHB President