



Governor Nathan Deal
Office of the Governor



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Office of Communications
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Deal announces federal appointment of agency head

Georgia Department of Public Health commissioner named head of Atlanta-based CDC

Gov. Nathan Deal today announced the appointment of Dr. J. Patrick O'Neal, current director of Health Protection for the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), as interim commissioner of DPH, effective immediately. The vacancy was created by the appointment of Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, current commissioner of DPH, as director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by President Donald Trump.

"I am immensely proud of my friend and colleague Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, and I am grateful to her for her tireless work to promote the health and well-being of Georgia's citizens," said Deal. "She has been an asset to the State of Georgia and I know she will bring the same determination and persistence to her new role of CDC director, working for the good of the entire country. I want to thank President Trump for naming one of our own to this prominent role and I am confident Dr. O'Neal will be able to successfully pick up where Brenda left off at DPH."

"I am humbled by the challenges that lie ahead, yet I am confident that the successes we've had in Georgia will provide me with a foundation for guiding the work of the CDC," said Fitzgerald. "The progress we've made in Georgia around early brain development, childhood obesity and creating a model for addressing the Ebola epidemic would not have been possible without the full support of Governor Deal and a dedicated public health staff."



Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D.

Fitzgerald formerly served as the commissioner of DPH and as State Health Officer. She is a board-certified Obstetrician-Gynecologist and practiced medicine for more than three decades before coming to Public Health in 2011. As Commissioner, Fitzgerald oversaw various state public health programs including Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Health Protection, Georgia WIC, Office of Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care and Vital Records. She also directed the state's 18 public health districts. She earned a bachelor's degree in Microbiology from Georgia State University and a medical degree from the Emory University School of Medicine. As a Major in the United States Air Force, Fitzgerald served at the Wurtsmith Air Force Strategic Air Command Base in Michigan and at the Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, D.C.



J. Patrick O'Neal, M.D.

O'Neal serves as the Director of Health Protection for DPH, overseeing more than a dozen public health programs including Epidemiology, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Emergency Preparedness and the Georgia Public Health Lab. He is also the medical director for the Office of EMS and Trauma. O'Neal previously practiced emergency medicine for 29 years at DeKalb Medical Center and also served as the regional medical director for EMS throughout the Metro Atlanta area. He earned a bachelor's degree from Davidson College and a medical degree from the Tulane University School of Medicine. Following medical school, O'Neal entered the United States Air Force for training in flight medicine and later served as a flight surgeon in Vietnam.