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Sommario/riassunto	What does it mean to be the nation's doctor? In this engaging narrative, journalist Mike Stobbe examines the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, emphasizing that it has always been unique within the federal government in its ability to influence public health. But now, in their efforts to provide leadership in public health policy, surgeons general compete with other high-profile figures such as the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services and the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Furthermore, in an era of declining budgets, when public health departments have eliminated tens of thousands of jobs, some argue that a lower-profile and ineffective surgeon general is a waste of money. By tracing stories of how surgeons general like Luther Terry, C. Everett Koop, and Joycelyn Elders created policies and confronted controversy in response to issues like smoking, AIDS, and masturbation, Stobbe highlights how this office is key to shaping the nation's health and explains why its

decline is harming our national well-being.
