

## 4/08/2003 Moran Leads Coalition in Introducing Rural Health Care Improvements

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Bipartisan Legislation Improves Health Care Services in Rural America

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran, Co-Chair of the Rural Health Care Coalition, today introduced legislation to make significant improvements to the delivery of health care in rural America. The Health Care Access and Rural Equity Act of 2003 (H-CARE) works to equalize Medicare payments between hospitals in rural and urban areas, improve the ability of rural hospitals to recruit and retain health care personnel, and assist with the costs of capital infrastructure improvements.

"A rural hospital can save a life, but it cannot continue to withstand payment disparities between themselves and hospitals in more urban areas," Moran said. "Rural hospitals need quality professionals and adequate reimbursements just like their more urban-based counterparts. This legislation recognizes the special needs of a rural hospital and brings more equality to the health care delivery system."

H-CARE improves the delivery of rural health care services by:

Reducing the difference in reimbursements between rural and urban facilities. Rural hospitals receive less federal funding than hospitals in urban areas for providing the same services. This legislation would raise base payments to rural hospitals to the same level as those in urban areas.

Improving opportunities for rural facilities to recruit and retain health care professionals. Payments to hospitals would be improved in order to recruit more health care professionals to rural hospitals. A shortage of trained health care professionals is hurting the delivery of quality health care in rural communities.

Providing opportunities for infrastructure improvements. Programs to provide funding for important improvement projects to rural health care facilities are reauthorized under this legislation. Funds can be used for infrastructure needs as well as rural health planning, network development and rural emergency medical services.

"Over the past several years, hospitals have been hurt by the continued decreases in reimbursements, yet despite these cuts, we continue to be there 24 hours a day, seven days a week, caring for the people in our communities," Greg Lundstrom, Hospital Administrator for Lindsborg Community Hospital in Lindsborg, Kansas, said. "This important legislation goes a long way in providing much-needed relief to rural hospitals, not only in Kansas, but throughout the country."

The Rural Health Care Coalition is a bipartisan group of 176 members of the House of Representatives, dedicated to improving health care in rural areas. Moran was selected to chair the group in January of 2001.

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