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November 12, 2004

The Honorable Jim Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2449 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4905

Dear Chairman Sensenbrenner:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA), I am writing to express our strong support for S. 2302, which reauthorizes the State 30/J-1 Visa Waiver Program for two years, and to urge its swift passage this year. As you are aware, the authorization for the program expired in June 2004.

The AHA represents nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems, networks and other providers of health care.

The State 30/J-1 Visa Waiver Program, first enacted in 1994 (Public Law 103-416), has played a crucial role in ensuring that well-qualified physicians are available to provide care in medically underserved areas of our country. During fiscal year 2003, more than 1,000 physicians participated in the program, bringing needed health care services to underserved areas in 49 states. In many areas of the country, the State 30 physician is the only source of health care.

The health care needs of rural America are great. Our nation's rural hospitals struggle to recruit and retain physicians. The supply of primary health care physicians, as well as medical specialists, in rural areas is steadily decreasing. S. 2302 reauthorizes the State 30/Visa Waiver Program and will help ensure that the health care needs of our communities are met.



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Once again, the AHA strongly supports S. 2302. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure swift passage when you reconvene next week.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack

Executive Vice President

cc: The Honorable Dennis Hastert
The Honorable Tom DeLay
The Honorable Roy Blunt