

November 3, 2005

The Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senate
Chairman
Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Specter:

The undersigned organizations today urge you to support continued funding for the Trauma-EMS program at the current level of \$3.5 million in the final Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education Appropriations legislation. On July 12, 2005 the Senate Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations recognized the absolute necessity of funding for the only federal source available to build trauma system infrastructure in the U.S., the Trauma-EMS Program administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration. Your continued leadership in recognizing the importance of trauma care in saving lives and the need to ensure that these systems are available to all Americans is needed now more than ever.

The Trauma-EMS program provides critical national leadership and leverages additional scarce state dollars to strengthen trauma systems so that seriously injured individuals, wherever they live, receive prompt emergency transport to the nearest appropriate trauma center within the “golden hour.” Receiving appropriate, quality trauma care within one hour of injury saves lives and provides the best chance for a good recovery. Achieving this result takes coordination, commitment of staff, development and implementation of standards of care, a process for designating trauma centers, and evaluation.

Currently, only eight states have fully developed trauma systems; twelve states do not even have the authority to designate trauma centers. When the American public is asked about its views on trauma centers and trauma systems large majorities value them as highly as having a police or fire department in their community.

Injury is the leading cause of death for Americans from age 1 through 34. In addition to potential terrorist threats, it goes without saying that the U.S. has also recently suffered countless tragedies from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. To help finance the relief and reconstruction efforts in the wake of Katrina and Rita, national leaders are calling for serious “belt-tightening” throughout the federal government. But not funding the ONLY program in the federal government that establishes trauma systems is not the answer.

We urge you to keep the momentum moving forward and help us finish this important task so that all Americans wherever they live in every state have access to quality trauma care.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Association for the Surgery of Trauma
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Surgeons
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American Hospital Association
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics
American Trauma Society
Brain Injury Association of America
Coalition for American Trauma Care
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Critical Illness and Trauma Foundation
Emergency Nurses Association
National Foundation for Trauma Care
National Association of State EMS Directors
Orthopaedic Trauma Association
Parkland Health and Hospital System

Report Language Requested for FY 2006:

Trauma Care

The Committee provides \$3,500,000 for trauma/emergency medical services. The fiscal year 2005 comparable level was \$3,449,000 and the administration did not request funds for this program for fiscal year 2006. This crucial program provides grants to states to support the development and enhancement of the basic infrastructure of trauma systems. It is intended to improve the Nation's overall trauma care systems, which are constantly activated to respond to a wide range of natural and man-made disasters.