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October 17, 2011

The Honorable Kent Conrad  
United States Senate  
530 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Conrad:

On behalf of our more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 42,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association (AHA) is pleased to support *The Craig Thomas Rural Hospital and Provider Equity Act of 2011* (R-HoPE) and applauds your commitment to America's rural health care providers.

This legislation would extend critical rural provisions that are set to expire and implement new provisions that would benefit rural hospitals. Among the expiring provisions are the outpatient hold-harmless for rural hospitals with fewer than 100 beds and sole community hospitals, the 5 percent rural add-on for home health services, and the grandfather clause allowing direct payments to independent laboratories for the technical component of pathology services. Rural hospitals and health care providers are often the backbone of their communities, and it is essential these programs be extended to ensure that rural providers can continue to provide high-quality care to their patients.

Your legislation also takes the important step of putting forward expanded provisions that are vital to rural and critical access hospitals (CAH), including: expansion of the low-volume adjustment to 2,000 discharges, and reimbursing on-call services at CAHs for Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists.

Again, we are pleased to support this legislation and look forward to working with you and your colleagues to achieve passage of this bill.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack  
Executive Vice President

