

Take a stand for rural hospitals by urging senators to back 'R-HoPE' bill

The AHA supports S. 1157, the "Craig Thomas Rural Hospital and Providers Equity Act," or R-HoPE, introduced by Sens. Kent Conrad, D-ND, and Pat Roberts, R-KS. The bill would improve Medicare reimbursement formulas for rural health care providers and is named after the late Republican senator from Wyoming.

The legislation would extend through 2011 the outpatient reimbursement policy for rural hospitals with fewer than 100 beds and for sole community hospitals. The bill would allow these hospitals' Medicare reimbursements to either be cost-based, which takes into account costs for similar services incurred by the hospital in previous years, or based on the prospective payment system – whichever is greater.

It also would allow independent laboratories to directly bill Medicare for the technical component of physician pathology tests; reinstate cost-based reimbursement to critical access hospitals for referral lab services that are provided off hospital property; and extend through December a 5% Medicare payment increase for home health services provided in rural areas.

The legislation increases payments to hospitals that treat a disproportionately large number of Medicare and Medicaid

patients, adjusts payments to rural hospitals that have fewer than 2,000 annual patient discharges and are located more than 15 miles from another hospital, improves payments for ambulance services in rural areas, and creates a loan program to help rural hospitals repair aging buildings.

The following senators endorse S. 1157. Urge your senators to cosponsor the bill.

Arkansas

Blanche Lincoln (D)

Colorado

Michael Bennet (D)
Mark Udall (D)

Iowa

Tom Harkin (D)

Kansas

Pat Roberts (R)

Maine

Susan Collins (R)

Minnesota

Amy Klobuchar (D)

Nebraska

Mike Johanns (R)

New Mexico

Jeff Bingaman (D)
Tom Udall (D)

North Dakota

Byron Dorgan (D)
Kent Conrad (D)

Oklahoma

James Inhofe (R)

South Dakota

Tim Johnson (D)
John Thune (R)

Utah

Orrin Hatch (R)

Wyoming

John Barrasso (R)

Total: 17