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NRHA to honor Congressional Rural Health Champions

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) is pleased to announce the winners of its 2013 Legislative Awards, which recognize outstanding leadership in rural health issues by both members of Congress and congressional staff.

The awards will be presented during NRHA's 24th annual Rural Health Policy Institute, which will bring 450 rural health professionals and advocates to Washington, D.C., Feb. 4-6.

This year's member recipients are Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY), Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), and Rep. Tom Reed (R-NY).

Staff awards will be presented to Kevin Courtois of the Minority Staff of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Carla McGarvey of the Office of Rep. Mike Thompson, and Meghan Taira of the Office of Sen. Charles Schumer.

Sen. Max Baucus has a long history of fighting on behalf of rural America. A key figure in the establishment of the Critical Access Hospital program, Baucus' efforts have protected and preserved the rural health care safety net for years. Throughout budget debates and discussions surrounding the future of rural hospitals, there was no greater champion than Baucus.

Sen. Charles Schumer truly understands the needs of upstate New York hospitals and of rural providers throughout the nation. His personal interest and attention to facilities in rural New York has long been appreciated. Schumer's leadership on critical rural hospital legislation in the 112th Congress was appreciated and valued by NRHA members throughout the country.

Sen. Charles Grassley has long been a friend of the National Rural Health Association. His continued work to protect rural hospitals in Iowa and throughout the country serves as a wonderful example to all members of Congress. Grassley's efforts to preserve and protect Medicare Dependent and Low-Volume Hospital programs in 2012 will long be remembered.

Rep. Tom Reed played a critical role in rural health legislation last year. His leadership in the House to introduce and advocate for the Rural Hospital Access Act of 2012 was critical to the

final extension of both the Medicare Dependent Hospital designation and the Low-Volume Hospital adjustment. Reed truly understands the needs and challenges of rural hospitals and continues to be a vital advocate on Capitol Hill.

Kevin Courtois continues to be one of the most unwavering rural health advocates in D.C. He is a vital staff member for one of the most important committees on Capitol Hill, the Senate Judiciary Committee. His continuing attention to rural specific provisions, applications and consequences in all legislation has earned him a sterling reputation as a defender of rural health care. NRHA members and the entire country are better off for his dedicated service.

Carla McGarvey is consistently one of rural America's greatest champions on Capitol Hill. Often serving in the background supporting her boss' strong efforts to fight for rural America's needs, she is a driving force behind many positive rural accomplishments made on Capitol Hill. She serves as a vital staff member for Rep. Mike Thompson, who served as the co-chair of the House Rural Health Coalition in the 112th Congress. Her knowledge of and dedication to rural health care is inspiring.

Meghan Taira is a critical voice for rural hospitals on Capitol Hill. Her understanding of the challenges, needs and opportunities facing providers in rural New York and throughout the country has helped her become one of the best rural health advocates on the Hill. Her dedication to rural providers is an inspiration and example to staff in both Chambers of Congress.

NRHA greatly appreciates the hard work and dedication displayed by this year's Legislative Award winners.

NRHA is a nonprofit organization working to improve the health and wellbeing of rural Americans and providing leadership on rural health issues through advocacy, communications, education and research. NRHA membership is made up of more than 21,000 diverse individuals and organizations, all of whom share the common bond of an interest in rural health.