



NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2017 Rural Health Policy Institute Requests

The Affordable Care Act Must Work for Rural Americans

The laudable goals of the Affordable Care Act were not fully achieved in rural America. The ACA took critical steps to improve the health of rural populations, who are per capita, older, poorer and sicker than other populations, by both reducing uninsured rates by 8% in rural counties and providing vital health benefits to rural patients. However, the lack of plan competition in rural markets, exorbitant premiums and co-pays, the co-op collapses, lack of Medicaid expansion, and devastating Medicare cuts to rural providers - - all collided to create a health care crisis in rural America. The goals of the ACA must remain, but Congress must make it work in rural America by 1) ending Medicare cuts to rural providers; 2) ending unnecessary burdensome regulations; 3) providing private market reforms that create choice and affordability in rural America; and 4) expanding Medicaid coverage to needy populations and ensuring equitable provider reimbursement.

Cosponsor the Save Rural Hospitals Act

Since 2010, 80 rural hospitals have closed. 673 additional facilities are vulnerable and could close—this represents over 1/3 of rural hospitals in the U.S. The rate of closures is steadily increasing, and on this trajectory, 25% of all rural hospitals will close in less than 10 years if Congress fails to act. If Congress allows 673 rural hospitals to shut their doors, 11.7 million patients nationwide will lose access to their nearest hospital and its emergency room, **236,000 rural healthcare jobs will vanish**, and \$277 billion in GDP will be lost over 10 years. Rural communities across the nation will erode – because when a rural hospital closes, the economy of a rural community collapses. When these hospitals close, most physicians, nurses, physician assistants and other health care providers linked to the hospital leave the community. Medical deserts are forming across the nation, leaving 77 percent of rural counties in the United States as Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas. The health of rural America is at stake. Rural populations are per capita older, poorer and sicker than their urban counterparts. Despite the goals of the Affordable Care Act, higher percentages of rural populations remain uninsured and underinsured. **The Save Rural Hospitals Act will stop the flood of rural hospital closures** and provide an innovative, sustainable delivery model for the future of rural health care.

Prevent Critical Rural Health Programs from Expiring

Several critically important rural Medicare “extenders” will expire on October 1, 2017 unless Congress intervenes. Congress created these unique payment structures for certain rural providers to meet the extreme challenges of rural health care delivery and enable them to keep their doors open. If Congress does not act, rural health providers will be hit with hundreds of millions of dollars in reimbursement cuts, and facilities will close. These extenders include important payments to small rural hospitals, rural ambulances and other critical providers.

Support Stable Funding for Rural America

The federal investment in rural health programs is a small portion of federal health care spending, but it is critical to rural Americans. These safety net programs increase access to health care providers, improve health outcomes for rural Americans, and increase the quality and efficiency of health care delivery in rural America. NRHA supports strong funding for the rural health care safety net and encourages Congress to continue funding these important programs in FY 2018 and beyond.

Join Senate Rural Health Caucus or House Rural Health Coalition

Join your colleagues in the Senate and House of Representatives as part of the Senate Rural Health Caucus or House Rural Health Care Coalition. The Caucus and the Coalition are a collection of rural health champions and have passed significant legislation improving the lives of 60 million rural Americans. Stand up for rural health care in the 115th Congress by joining these important groups!

Co-Chairs of the Senate Rural Health Caucus:

Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS)

Sen. Al Franken (D-MN)

Co-Chairs of the House Rural Health Care Coalition:

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rogers (R-WA)

Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI)