



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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Rep. Kind, Rural Health Care Coalition Unveil Comprehensive Rural Health Care Improvement Bill

More Than 50 Bipartisan Members Support Improving Rural Health Care System

Washington, DC – In an effort to further improve rural Americans' access to quality health care, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) today joined the co-chairs of the House Rural Health Care Coalition (RHCC) Reps. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND) and Greg Walden (R-OR) to announce the *Health Care Access and Rural Equity Act* (H-CARE). The bipartisan legislation, which was introduced with 50 cosponsors, is a comprehensive bill that seeks to improve the rural health care infrastructure, and help rural health care providers address the unique challenges associated with delivering quality care close to home.

“People living in western Wisconsin and in rural communities across the country deserve the same access to quality health care that urban areas provide,” Rep. Kind said. “Right now, however, rural residents often face shortages of primary care physicians and specialists, and long waiting times for first response services. This package of improvements to our rural health care system will ensure that providers can meet the unique challenges of serving a rural area.”

Included in the package is a provision championed by Rep. Kind, which would protect the large number of Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) in western Wisconsin by ensuring CAHs are reimbursed at the same rate for treating all Medicare beneficiaries, including those enrolled in private Medicare Advantage (MA) plans.

H-CARE would also:

- Authorize health information technology grants for rural practitioners.
- Provide flexibility in the number of beds Critical Access Hospitals are allowed to fill.
- Require prompt payment to rural pharmacies by Medicare prescription drug plans.
- Ensure adequate rural representation on the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission.
- Establish a Rural Health Quality Advisory Commission.
- Raise Rural Health Clinic reimbursements to more appropriately cover costs.
- Extend several expiring Medicare adjustment payments for rural practitioners including physicians practicing in physician-scarce areas, rural ambulance providers, rural home health agencies and specific classes of rural hospitals.

(more)

To date, 12 national organizations have endorsed the H-CARE Act including the American Hospital Association, National Rural Health Association, American Osteopathic Association, American Ambulance Association, National Association of Rural Health Clinics, National Association for Home Care and Hospice, College of American Pathologists, Rural Referral Center/Sole Community Hospital Coalition, Federation of American Hospitals, American Counseling Association, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists, Association of Community Pharmacists and the Section 508 Hospital Coalition.