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National Rural Health Association Applauds Legislation That Continues Assistance for Rural Health Care Providers

(Alexandria, VA) – The National Rural Health Association joined Representatives Greg Walden (R-OR), Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), John Peterson (R-PA) and Allen Boyd (D-FL) today to applaud their new legislation continuing support for rural health care providers.

"The Medicare Modernization Act took great strides to support rural health care providers, but unfortunately, many of those protections are expiring," said Bill Sexton, President, National Rural Health Association and Chief Executive, Providence North Coast Service Area. "NRHA strongly endorses this legislation because it will extend the MMA's important investments in rural health care, and will assist rural providers in their ongoing efforts to provide medical care for those in need."

The following payments are scheduled to expire at the end of this year or next; the Rural Health Provider Payment Extension Act (H.R. 5118) will extend them through 2011:

- Outpatient prospective payment system hold harmless treatment for sole community hospitals and small rural hospitals;
- Medicare incentive payment program for physicians practicing in Physician Scarcity Areas;
- Medicare 2 percent bonus payment for ambulance trips;
- Medicare work geographic adjustment 1.0 floor for rural physician payments;
- Reasonable cost payment for rural hospital clinical lab tests (performed as part of their outpatient services);
- Five percent add-on payment for home health services provided in rural areas.

"There is so much more that needs to be done to improve access to health care in rural America," said Alan Morgan, NRHA's CEO. "But first we must make sure we do not lose ground, and that is why it is so important to extend the assistance provided in the MMA."

The NRHA is a national nonprofit organization, with approximately 10,000 members that provides leadership on rural health issues. The Association's mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of rural Americans and to provide leadership on rural health issues through advocacy, communications, education and research. The NRHA membership is made up of a diverse collection of individuals and organizations, all of whom share the common bond of an interest in rural health.

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