

**McMorris Rodgers & Thompson Introduce
Rural Health Care Bill**

*Bipartisan Bill Would Protect Access to
Health Care in Eastern Washington's Rural Areas*

Washington, D.C. – Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) and Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA), Co-Chairs of the Congressional Rural Health Coalition, introduced H.R. 3859, *The Rural Hospital and Provider Equity (R-HOPE) Act of 2012* today. This bipartisan bill would help rural communities in Eastern Washington and across America protect and expand access to high-quality health care.

“As someone who grew up on a family farm, I know that rural communities have unique needs - particularly when it comes to accessing quality health care,” said Rep. McMorris Rodgers. “The numbers speak for themselves: There are 75 million Americans who live in rural areas (about 25 percent of the population), but only 10 percent of physicians practice there. In fact, one county in Eastern Washington doesn't have a single primary care physician. Additionally, when it comes to federal policies, rural communities are often left out of the decision-making process. That's why I'm proud to join Rep. Thompson in introducing this bipartisan bill which will protect access to rural health care and ensure that rural communities are fairly represented in the government's health care policies.”

“The quality of health care you receive should not depend on whether you're from a big city or small town,” said Rep. Thompson. “Ensuring everyone has access to high quality, affordable health care isn't a Republican priority or Democrat priority – it is a national priority. That is why I am proud to be working across the aisle with Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers to make sure that rural America has access to health care.”

The R-HOPE Act of 2012 would bring parity to rural communities by:

- Increasing payments to rural hospitals which take a disproportionate share (DSH) of Medicare and Medicaid patients to the levels that urban DSH receive to better reflect the actual costs of providing care
- Improve payments for lab services in rural hospitals

- Continue geographic reclassification for certain hospitals in sparsely populated states
- Ensure adequate rural representation on the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC)
- Raise Rural Health Clinic reimbursements to more appropriately cover costs
- Extend several expiring Medicare incentive payments for rural practitioners including physicians practicing in physician scarcity areas, rural ambulance providers, and specific classes of rural hospitals.

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) endorsed today's bill. "We commend Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Congressman Mike Thompson for the introduction of the *Rural Hospital and Provider Equity Act of 2012*," said NRHA CEO Alan Morgan. "This legislation will go far in ensuring that rural providers have the necessary tools to provide quality care for all rural Americans. We encourage the passage of this vital legislation."

This week, Rep. McMorris Rodgers received NRHA's 2012 Outstanding Legislative Leader award. "NRHA is pleased to award Representative McMorris Rodgers with our Outstanding Legislative Leader award for great efforts to improve the health of rural America," said Mr. Morgan. As co-chair of the House Rural Health Coalition, she is leading the charge in Congress to improve longstanding payment and health disparities in rural America. NRHA thanks her for being a rural health champion."

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