



For immediate release  
Feb. 2, 2016

Contact: Maggie Elehwany  
202-639-0550

## **NRHA to honor Congressional Rural Health Champions**

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) is pleased to announce the winners of its 2016 Rural Health Champion 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 27th annual Rural Health Policy Institute, which will bring more than 450 rural health professionals and advocates to Washington, D.C., Feb. 2-4.

This year's member recipients are Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.-6), Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-Iowa-2), and Sen. Michael Bennet (D-Colo.).

Staff awards will be presented to JP Mason of the Office of Rep. Graves, Vonnie Hempel of the Office of Rep. Loebsack and Rohini Kosoglu of the Office of Sen. Bennet.

**Rep. Sam Graves** is a true advocate for rural America. As a lifelong resident of Missouri and sixth-generation family farmer, he has spent his life and career working on behalf of rural America. His work to protect rural hospitals in Missouri and throughout the country by introducing the Save Rural Hospitals Act serves as an example to all members of Congress.

**Rep. Dave Loebsack** truly understands the needs of rural providers in Iowa and throughout the nation. He has protected and preserved the rural health care safety net while serving on the Energy and Commerce Committee. Loebsack's efforts to protect rural providers by introducing the Save Rural Hospitals Act makes him a champion for rural America.

**Sen. Michael Bennet** is a friend of rural Americans. He has long championed legislation to expand access to quality and affordable health care in rural areas. His dedication to rural Colorado providers, and providers across the nation, make him an inspiring leader in the Senate.

**JP Mason** is a critical champion for rural hospitals on Capitol Hill. His unwavering efforts and attention to Rep. Sam Grave's legislation to save rural hospitals by reversing devastating Medicare cuts, providing necessary regulatory relief, and setting out a future model to allow communities to keep a hospital that works for their community's needs is greatly appreciated. Rural providers and NRHA members are better off for his dedicated service as a defender of rural health care.

**Vonnie Hempel** is a consistent and strong advocate for rural health on Capitol Hill. She serves as a vital staff member for Rep. Dave Loebsack. Often serving in the background supporting her boss' strong

efforts to fight for rural America's needs, her knowledge of and dedication to rural health care is inspiring.

**Rohini Kosoglu** is a longtime champion for rural America. She is a driving force behind her Sen. Michael Bennet's legislation to expand access to quality and affordable health care in rural America. Her constant and unfailing dedication to the health of rural Americans in Colorado and throughout the country is an example to staff in both chambers.

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.