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NRHA endorses reintroduction of Save Rural Hospitals Act to new Congress

[Nearly eighty rural hospitals have closed since 2010](#), and [673 additional facilities are vulnerable to closure](#)—representing over 1/3 of rural hospitals in the U.S. Continued cuts to hospital payments have taken their toll, forcing closures, creating medical deserts across rural America and leaving many of our nation’s most vulnerable populations without timely access to care.

That’s why [the National Rural Health Association advances and supports the bipartisan Save Rural Hospitals Act](#), reintroduced today to the 115th Congress by U.S Reps. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) and Dave Loebsack (D-Iowa).

“This bill shines a light on the rural health crisis in Missouri and across the country,” says Rep. Graves. “If we accept this reality – and neglect this much needed conversation, rural hospitals in Missouri will continue to close, leaving thousands without access to health care, putting lives in jeopardy and affecting every family in rural America. That’s simply not acceptable.”

CMS currently spends 2.5 percent less on rural beneficiaries than on those in urban areas. The Save Rural Hospitals Act will provide rural hospitals with financial and regulatory relief to allow them to stay open and care for rural residents who are older, poorer and have higher rates of chronic disease than their urban counterparts.

The bipartisan bill will stabilize and strengthen rural hospitals by:

- Stopping the many cuts in Medicare that rural hospitals have endured for years,
- Providing rural hospitals with new funding so they can provide quality primary care to rural patients across the nation, and
- Creating a path forward for struggling rural hospitals by allowing them to provide care that makes sense in their communities and receive fair reimbursement for emergency room and primary care.

“Rural hospitals are the lifeline for many Iowans living in rural communities,” says Rep. Loebsack. “Rural hospitals are the cornerstone of ensuring patients have access to high quality care and are a major contributor to the local economy, creating jobs in the hospital and the community. The Save Rural Hospitals Act will ensure rural patients in Iowa and across the country have the health care services they need.”

[Rural Americans are facing a crisis in access to health care](#). If Congress doesn’t act now to prevent further closures, rural hospitals will be forced to lay off workers, cut wages, reduce services and close doors. Lives will be lost, and local economies will suffer. The average critical access hospital creates 195 jobs and generates \$8.4 million in annual payroll.

“The National Rural Health Association has continuously called on Congress to stabilize rural hospitals by stopping the many cuts in Medicare that are causing rural closures and providing common-sense regulatory relief,” says NRHA CEO Alan Morgan. “We applaud Reps. Graves and Loebsack for reintroducing this bill and call for Congress to quickly pass this comprehensive legislation to save rural hospitals and ensure emergency access to care for rural patients across the nation.”

NRHA is a nonprofit organization working to improve the health and wellbeing of rural Americans and provide 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.