



Quick Facts

What SORHs surveyed said...

About their role:

- 100% partner with other organizations who are able to contact a member of the House or Senate
- 48% serve as state coordinators for hill visits during the Policy Institute
- 13% are unable to contact a member of the House or Senate regarding legislation

About matching funds:

- 28% would cease to exist or have significant funding decrease if 3:1 federal match would be eliminated
- 33% would experience no change if the match were eliminated
- 28% are "burdened" by the federal match requirement
- 9% are unsure of the impact of the federal match on their SORH

Overheard at the Policy Institute:

- "I hope you're here because you want to change the chronic neglect of health care in rural communities. The past approach to rural health care can be summed up in five words: 'pray you don't get sick.'" – **Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa)**

Contact Information

[Teryl Eisinger](#)
Director

(586) 739-9940

[Betty King](#)

Program Specialist
(520) 319-0113

[Bill Hessert](#)

Program Writer/Liaison
(814) 231-1213

[Donna Pfaendtner](#)

Program Assistant
(586) 336-4627

President Obama Signs \$787 Billion Economic Stimulus Bill

President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law this past Tuesday (February 17). As noted in a press release issued by the National Rural Health Association, the final version of the \$787 billion economic stimulus package provides "historic levels of spending for rural America."

Please read the NRHA [press release](#) which highlights the economic stimulus package and its impact on rural communities.

Webinar to Examine Economic Stimulus Opportunities for SORHs, Communities

Want to learn more about the economic stimulus package and how SORHs can help implement stimulus-related programs in rural communities? Then plan on participating in the "Opportunities in the Stimulus Package for Rural Communities and Roles for SORHs" Webinar on Wednesday, February 25 at 3:00 p.m. EST. Additional information and call-in instructions can be obtained in the [Calendar of Events](#) section of the NOSORH Web site.

2009 NRHA Policy Institute Focuses on Change

Change was definitely in the air at this year's Rural Health Policy Institute, held January 26-28 in Washington, D.C. In addition to the recent convening of a more Democratic-leaning 111th U.S. Congress and the even more recent inauguration of Barack Obama, the approximately 400 Policy Institute attendees were in Washington at the same time the U.S. House of Representatives debated President Obama's proposed economic stimulus package.

Not surprisingly, many of the presentations during the Policy Institute focused on opportunities for change; attendees visiting legislators on Capitol Hill also carried the message that "Change Must Come to Rural America, Too." Attendees representing NOSORH and SORHs also used the Hill visits to educate legislators on the importance of reauthorizing SORH legislation so SORHs can continue delivering key programs and services to rural communities. Prominent policymakers who spoke during the Policy Institute included Sens. Tom Harkin (Iowa), Blanche Lincoln (Arkansas), Bernie Sanders (Vermont) and Mark Warner (Virginia); and Reps. Earl Pomeroy (North Dakota) and Pete Starks (California).

Visit the [NRHA Web site](#) to access photos, PowerPoint presentations and other information from this year's Policy Institute. [Click here](#) and scroll through the Policy Committee Reports if you would like to review minutes from the NOSORH Membership Meeting on January 25.

NOSORH Seeks SORH Reauthorization

In September 2008, NOSORH learned that federal funding for State Offices of Rural Health (SORHs) may be in jeopardy. Without this critical funding, SORHs could cease to exist – the NOSORH Policy Committee has been working since mid-September on reauthorizing and re-funding the SORH program which:

- Eliminates the maximum funding cap;
- Extends SORH authorization through 2014;
- Increases the minimum award for SORHs from \$50,000 to not less than \$150,000 annually;
- Provides funding for SORHs instead of "states which establish SORHs"; and
- Maintains a 3:1 match requirement.

The Policy Committee and NOSORH Legislative Liaison Bill Finerfrock also have been working to identify members of Congress to co-sponsor House and Senate versions of a reauthorization bills. Not surprisingly, most of Congress' attention has focused recently on the economic stimulus package.

Hear and view more about the strategies

[Preparing for the Policy Institute webinar](#)

Read the background and timeline of re-authorization

[Policy Committee notes](#)

Talk or comment about the stimulus

Call [Bill Finerfrock](#) (202) 544-1880

NOSORH members met at NRHA Policy Institute: Review meeting notes [here](#).