



March 4, 2010

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health, which represents the country's fifty State Offices of Rural Health as they work to improve health and health care in rural America, wholeheartedly supports the Veterans Access to Care Act, your legislation to increase the workforce strength at Veterans Administration facilities and improve access to care for the country's veterans. The legislation provides loan repayment and scholarship incentives to high-demand health care professionals to practice at VA medical centers and State Veterans Homes by making these facilities eligible sites for the National Health Service Corps.

Veterans in rural America often struggle to obtain timely appointments at VA facilities. Rural areas are generally older than urban areas and are home to many aging veterans. In addition, a disproportionate number of returning combat veterans come from rural America and continue to return home from duty. Across the age and service spectrum, these rural veterans have unique needs for care that the VA works hard to meet. But the VA cannot keep up with the staffing needed for these growing demands, and rural veterans too often wait for a VA appointment or seek care from already short-staffed local health care providers who do not have the VA's specialized expertise.

By allowing the VA to tap the already proven National Health Service Corps to better meet its workforce needs, the Veterans Access to Care Act offers a creative approach to improving veterans' access to care. If the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health can be of any assistance as the legislation moves forward, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Mark Schoenbaum, President

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF STATE OFFICES OF RURAL HEALTH

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