

Bill will provide much needed revitalization to Emergency Medical Services in US

Washington, DC – Today, Congressman Tim Walz and Congresswoman Sue Myrick announced they have introduced bipartisan legislation to improve emergency medical services, including training for first responders and strengthening emergency communication.

“When southern Minnesotans call 9-1-1, they want to know that help is on the way immediately,” said Rep. Tim Walz. “We need a better, more efficient way to make sure the heroes in our community have the resources they need to save lives. This will mean better care, lower health care costs and the increased efficiency will mean saved taxpayer dollars. I am proud to introduce this legislation with my colleague Rep. Myrick and thank her for her efforts on this bill.”

“Emergency medical services are a vital part of the health and well-being of any community. With the grants created in this bill, we can ensure that emergency medical providers in the field have the training, resources and communication necessary to provide the best care possible,” said Rep. Sue Myrick of North Carolina. “These grants will be funded through voluntary donations, and will save taxpayer money in the long term by enabling emergency teams to provide more effective and less costly care. I am pleased to be a cosponsor of this important bill, and I appreciate the work of my colleague Rep. Walz in crafting this legislation.”

“In many parts of the country, emergency care systems are highly fragmented, poorly equipped and often underfunded, leading to lives lost from heart attacks, stroke and other acute health emergencies,” said Ralph Sacco, American Heart Association President. “We applaud Representatives Walz and Myrick for introducing strong legislation that will address the systemic problems cited by the Institute of Medicine, through measures that promote quality emergency care and timely transport to the most appropriate care setting.”

“On behalf of our 1,500 EMS supervisor, manager, chief and executive members, the National EMS Management Association is pleased to endorse HR 6528. Because EMS agencies provide healthcare services in both the public health and public safety sectors, EMS is often a legislative after-thought in all three environments. HR 6528 is the first comprehensive bill to be introduced in a very long time that touches all the components of an effective EMS system. We commend EMS caucus co-chair Congressman Walz and Congresswoman Myrick for their leadership in improving the healthcare system’s own safety net. When passed, HR 6528 will shore up the infrastructure for, and stabilize the operations of, fragile EMS agencies that respond to the medical needs of every citizen and visitor on every square inch of America,” said Gary Wingrove, President of the National EMS Management Association.

“The EMS community is grateful that Representatives Walz and Myrick have introduced this historic legislation. While field Emergency Medical Services around the nation saves lives every day we are challenged by lack of coordination and standardization, and aging infrastructure. With the passage of this bill we will see more research, investments in quality, integration of EMS into the rest of health care, and innovation that will improve our services and lower health care costs,” said Kurt Krumperman, President of Advocates for EMS.

The legislation is fiscally responsible and will rely on voluntary contributions made by taxpayers who will be given the option of donating to a fund for Emergency Medical Services when they file their federal income tax returns.

A summary of the legislation is included below:

The Field EMS Quality, Innovation and Cost-Effectiveness Improvement Act

Recognition of National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) as Primary Federal Agency for Field EMS:

- NHTSA has functioned in this role for decades but without federal funding and authority to drive improvements in field EMS quality, innovation and preparedness.
- NHTSA would develop a cohesive national field EMS strategy to strengthen the development of field EMS at the Federal, State and local levels.
- Recognition of NHTSA's role as the primary federal agency for *field* EMS would not diminish HHS' role as the primary federal agency for *hospital based* EMS nor DHS' role as the primary federal agency for preparedness.

Federal Funding to Forge Path Out of the Crossroads: Establishment of three essential grant programs to foster improvements in quality, innovation and preparedness and strengthen accountability including:

- EMS Agency Grants -- to promote excellence in all aspects of field EMS, enhance the quality

through evidence-based and medically directed care, promote universal availability of field EMS

in all geographic locations of the Nation, spur innovation in the delivery of field EMS, and

improve EMS agency preparedness for everyday and catastrophic emergency medical response.

- State Grants -- to improve field EMS system performance, integration and accountability, ensure

preparedness for field EMS at the State and local levels, enhance physician medical oversight of

field EMS systems and care, improve coordination between regional field EMS systems and

integration into the health care system, enhance data collection to continually improve the field

EMS system and enhance standardization nationally of certification of EMTs and paramedics.

- Education Grants -- provided to EMS educational institutions to ensure the availability, quality,

and capability of field EMS educators, practitioners and medical directors.

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Improved Quality and Accountability:

- Enhance Field EMS quality by establishing national guidelines for medical oversight and direction by physicians of field EMS, promoting high-quality medical direction and maximizing participation and training of physician medical direction, evaluation by GAO of medical liability and reimbursement issues that may impede medical direction, enhance data collection and analysis to better inform the provision of high quality field EMS, development of a path toward integration of field EMS medical reports into patients electronic medical records.

Evaluation of Innovative Delivery Models:

- Evaluate innovative models for access and delivery of field EMS for patients, including alternative dispositions of low-acuity patients.

Enhanced Research:

- Enhancing research in field EMS by authorizing a Field EMS Practice Center and delineating specified funding streams for other federal EMS research to further improve quality, outcomes and promote the adoption of cost-effective treatments in the field.

EMS Trust Fund:

- Establishment of an Emergency Medical Services Trust Fund to be funded by voluntary contributions made by taxpayers when filing their federal income tax forms for the purpose of funding the grant programs provided in this legislation