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Congressional, Senatorial, Gubernatorial and Presidential Campaign Press Releases

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Iowa-S. Dakota Physicians Appeal to Presidential Candidates: 'Help Defend America's Safest and Highest Quality Hospitals'

DES MOINES, Iowa, Dec. 6 /PRNewswire/ -- A group of physicians from the border area between Iowa and S. Dakota are appealing to both Democratic and Republican candidates for President to help stop the threatened shut down of America's safest and highest quality hospitals, including their own.

The appeal comes in an open letter to the candidates (below) that was prompted by threatened action by Senator Max Baucus, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee. Baucus, acting on behalf of "big box" hospitals, has sought to effectively shut down physician-run hospitals despite evidence that patients receive better, safer care and are less likely to die. (Source: CMS/HHS studies 2005)

The physicians refute a number of attacks that have been made against them and other physician-run hospitals either by or on behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA). The AHA represents "big box" hospitals that are typically run by non-physicians. The AHA has steadfastly refused to provide Congress with detailed patient outcome statistics in open hearings so that apples to apples comparisons can be made with physician-run hospitals.

Instead of focusing on issues related to patient care, outcomes and true cost comparisons, AHA administrators and their congressional surrogates have attacked the integrity of physicians who refuse to put their patients at risk in "big box" hospitals.

For more information please contact Molly Sandvig, Executive Director, Physician Hospitals of America (PHA) Office: 605-321-3483. PHA is the national organization of physician-run and owned hospitals.

LETTER SENT TO PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS IN IOWA:

Siouxland Surgery Center
600 Sioux Point Road - Dakota Dunes, South Dakota 57049
605-232-3332

Dear Presidential Candidates,

As physicians concerned with the present and future care of our patients, we would appreciate a moment of your time during your busy campaign. As you know, many "crises" have been pointed out in healthcare, including the issues of the uninsured, Medicare program solvency, fraudulent billing practices and medical inflation, just to name a few. While we understand these issues must be addressed, we are writing to ask you to support a hospital ownership issue. We are asking that our well run physician-owned hospital not be legislated out of existence.

While each presidential candidate is addressing the major issue involved in the national healthcare management, the US Finance Committee is poised to wipe out nearly 200 of America's physician-run hospitals at the urgings of a few politicians and the huge hospital chains for whom they appear to work. Our cause is truly a "David versus Goliath" issue that a monopolistic Goliath American Hospital Association (AHA) may defeat.

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Physician owned and run hospitals may have a long history in America (e.g. Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic), but recently have been vilified as a demonstration of physician avarice and patient abuse absent any legitimate evidence. The CMS has demonstrated our facilities are of good quality and are good for the hospital industry in two studies. We urge you to review the enclosed pamphlets that outline the fallacies of the AHA's complaints against us. In spite of this evidence, we feel our competitors will restrain us through legislative means not because any concern regarding self-referral, over-utilization or "cherry-picking" of patients, but only because this is an opportunity to eliminate a competitor.

Specific to our facility, I would like to share the following facts. Our patient satisfaction is high. Press Ganey, an independent company that tracks patient satisfaction recently surveyed 1460 hospitals nation wide. In 18 of 25 satisfaction categories we rank in the top 1%, and overall in the top 5%. Our quality is high. We are ranked in the top 5% in the nation for spinal surgery and our total joint program has been given a 5 star rating by Healthgrades for the third year in a row. We are responsible to our community. We partner with our local trauma/heart hospital at their ownership level of 40%, take full call to cover trauma and indigent care, donate to local charities, run 100 outreach rural specialty clinics throughout our three state area (Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota), and provide indigent care. We do not "cherry pick" patients. Approximately 35% of our volume is Medicare/Medicaid services. We take care of every patient that is appropriate for our facility. We attract specialty physicians to a traditionally underserved area. Our facility is recognized by young recruits as being a special environment in which to provide care for patients. They know all will have a voice in the management of their practice. This fact is true in spite of a "not for profit" hospital 90 miles north of us offering twice the starting salary for young neurosurgeons that we do. We have created jobs. By attracting our physicians, support staff has grown and their job satisfaction is very high. Compare that fact to most hospitals.

If our hospital is closed, we feel our community will not recover all of the advances we have been able to create for our community in spite of difficult times. The Senate Finance Committee is scheduled to meet on this matter December 5th. Because of the urgency of our cause we are directly contacting all of you. We are asking that you publicly support our right to compete with the large hospital systems and protect the choices we feel our patients should have. Please tell Congress not to destroy America's physician- run hospitals. A list our hospitals is attached for your review.

Respectfully,

Dr. Ralph Reeder
675 Arrowhead Ct
Dakota Dunes, SD 57049

Dr. Robert Zimmerman
915 Willow Circle
Dakota Dunes, SD 57049

Dr. Lawrence Volz
488 Blue Stem Trail
Dakota Dunes, SN 57049

Dr. Keith Vollstedt
4511 Grayhawk Ridge Dr.
Sioux City, IA 51106

Dr. Paul Johnson
309 W. Pinehurst Trail
Dakota Dunes, SD 57049

Dr. Todd Johnson
573 Monterey Trail
Dakota Dunes, SD 57049

Dr. Thomas Kenny
956 Pebble Beach
Dakota Dunes, SD 57049

Dr. Kevin Preston
105 Doral Lane
Dakota Dunes, SD 57049

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