

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 15, 2008

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member
House Agriculture Committee
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim McCrery
Ranking Member
House Ways and Means Committee
1139 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Peterson, Harkin, Rangel, and Baucus and Ranking Members Goodlatte, Chambliss, McCrery, and Grassley:

It has come to our attention that a provision regarding physician-owned hospitals has been included as a pay-for in the latest Senate farm bill proposal. We are deeply concerned by the impact this provision, if identical to previous attempts to ban physician-owned hospitals, would have on the ability of Wenatchee Valley Medical Center and neighboring community hospitals to provide care in rural Washington.

Wenatchee Valley Medical Center was founded in 1940 by three doctors and today is completely owned by 170 physicians, each with a share of just over half a percent. It employs 1200 individuals and provides health care services to over a quarter

million people throughout an area the size of the State of Maryland. The Wenatchee Valley Medical Center accepts all patients, regardless of their ability to pay, and maintains an excellent working relationship with community hospitals in the region, providing a majority of staffing and referrals for those facilities. In addition, the Medical Center has demonstrated its importance to the region under our state's Certificate of Need program.

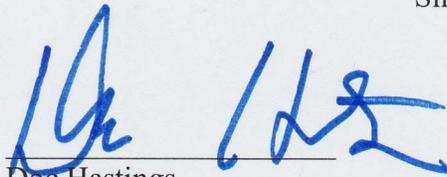
Previous physician ownership language considered in this Congress offers no protection for well-performing hospitals such as Wenatchee Valley Medical Center that provide a wide array of services in rural and underserved communities. Blocking Medicare and Medicaid payments to any doctor-owned facility or forcing such facilities to completely restructure their operations without regard for quality of care, efficiency, or patient need is a drastic move that should be reexamined before any further action is taken.

We ask that you either refrain from including the doctor-owned hospital provision in the farm bill or improve the provision to protect the Wenatchee Valley Medical Center and its clinics. We have identified several possible solutions that would improve the language and we ask that you work with us to ensure protection for the facility as it exists today.

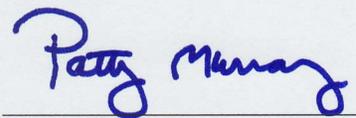
Federal farm policy should not result in reduced health care access in rural America.

We stand ready to work with you to provide for our agricultural community and protect health care access in rural America.

Sincerely,



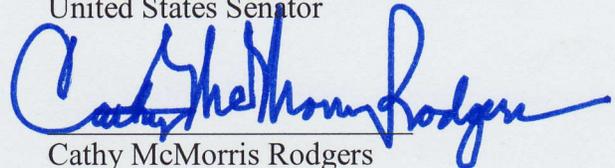
Doc Hastings
Member of Congress



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

cc: House and Senate Farm Bill Conferees