

OSRC

Political Action Contact Team (PACT)

Recognition of Respiratory Therapists Under the Medicare Home Health Benefit

The OSRC PACT members met in Washington DC on March 6th and 7th to speak with our various congressional delegations. The focus of our meetings was to once again request sponsorship of House Resolution 964. Many of you will remember this by its former name HR 2905, which died a quiet death last session by not being brought out of committee for a vote.

The text of the bill can be viewed at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/> . Just search for HR 964

We are getting an early start this year and Rep. Rick Renzi of Arizona has kindly offered to sponsor legislation to ask CMS to recognize RT's as a provider under the Home Health benefit. We are actively seeking companion legislation on the Senate side from Senator Trent Lott's (R-Mississippi) office. They are the ones who sponsored during the last session and we're hoping for a repeat.

Oregon's delegation consisted of Marilyn Barclay (standing in for the recumbent Joe Dwan) and Norm Kerr. We were received kindly by all the staffers with whom we spoke and participated in encouraging dialogue leaving us hopeful that, as this process moves forward, our congressional delegations will sign on. Both Congressmen Walden and Wu's offices indicated a good understanding of the validity of our request and saw no problem with signing on again. Even though the other Congressional and Senate offices were less forthcoming, once a "Dear Colleague" letter is sent to them Rep. Renzi's office, I think support will increase dramatically.

What can you do to help? PLEASE go to www.AARC.org , find the Icon on the right side of the screen to contact congress and follow the prompts. If you know your own ZIP code, you're qualified to do this....It's so simple even my 85 year old grandmother can do it.

The message is simple too:

"Please recognize Respiratory Therapists as providers under the Home Health benefit by supporting HR 964 or companion legislation in the Senate."

Now, if you want, you can spice it up with a few "Whereas's and a couple of "Therefore be it resolved's" but the central message is the same. Homebound patients will benefit from letting RT's in the home to care for patients with respiratory problems.

Your support and letters are crucial to our success. Any congressional office will gauge their support by the coherence and cogency of the letters they receive and since I know there are a lot of intelligent and opinionated Respiratory Therapists out there, all you need is some incentive to write.

How about this? Do you ever get tired of seeing the same old patients recycling through the ER, onto the Medical floor and then home for awhile before they come back? Do you think maybe if their problems were addressed by the better prepared, competency tested, and recognized expert member of the health care team they might do better at home? Well, HR 964 is a first step in the right direction to make that happen and your support, as the clinical expert, will help make HR 964 a reality. So, do your best, write the letters and help homebound patients get the care they require and deserve. If you need help, let us know.

If you have questions, concern or suggestions, you can contact the PACT team as follows:

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