



March 25, 2009

The Honorable Jason Altmire
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Altmire:

The Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) would like to express its strong support for H.R. 978, the ***Helicopter Medical Services Patient Safety, Protection and Coordination Act***. We applaud your leadership in introducing this legislation that would ensure patients receive quality medical care when they are transported on air ambulances.

As you are well aware, in the last year, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of medical helicopter accidents and fatalities. The National Transportation Safety Board has investigated nine fatal emergency medical services (EMS) accidents with a total of 35 fatalities. In 2008 alone, there have been seven fatal accidents with 28 fatalities. H.R. 978 will protect patients by providing states with the clear authority to regulate within their boundaries certain aspects of helicopter medical services without infringing on the Federal Aviation Administration's oversight of aviation safety.

States currently oversee ground medical transportation, but oversight of helicopter medical services is less defined. Medical care provided to critically ill and injured patients during transport should not be compromised just because a patient is flown by air ambulance, rather than moved by ground ambulance. To protect patient safety, enable the provision of high quality patient care, and ensure the appropriate coordination of EMS, it is essential that Congress clarify the ability of states to set standards for patients aboard air ambulances, just as they do for ground ambulances.

As the voice of more than 36,000 emergency nurses, ENA is the world's largest professional organization devoted to the advancement of emergency nursing practice. If we can be of any assistance in bringing this legislation to reality, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely yours,

William T. Briggs, RN, MSN, CEN, FAEN
President