ANA URGES SUPPORT FOR HOME HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION: ENSURES BETTER PATIENT ACCESS TO CARE, REMOVES BARRIERS FOR NURSES AS QUALIFIED PROVIDERS

SILVER SPRING, MD – The American Nurses Association (ANA) is appealing to lawmakers to support the “Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2011” (H.R. 2267, S. 227). This bipartisan legislation, just introduced in the House by Reps. Allyson Schwartz (D-PA) and Greg Walden (R-OR), allows Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) to sign home health plans of care and certify Medicare patients for the home health benefit.

“This legislation will help improve access to care,” said ANA President Karen A. Daley, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN. “APRNs are a vital source of care with the education and training to facilitate home health plans of care. In order to meet our nation’s health care needs, an integrated, national health care workforce that optimizes utilization of all qualified providers must be put into action.”

“We have a responsibility to provide America’s seniors with high quality health care, and a key part of that is ensuring they have access to timely home health care services,” Rep. Schwartz added. “These valued health care professionals play a central role in the delivery of primary care, particularly in medically underserved areas, and are essential to the coordination of team-based care.”

“This bill will reduce unnecessary and duplicative burdens on providers and seniors in need of home health services,” Rep. Walden said. “Particularly in rural areas like central, southern, and eastern Oregon where physicians are scarce, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, clinical
nurse specialists, and certified nurse-midwives are essential components of the health care delivery system. Not only are they serving on the front lines of primary care, but also in many areas they are the only option readily available."

APRNs are playing an increasing role in American health care delivery. Medicare has recognized the autonomous practice of APRNs for nearly two decades, and these health care professionals now coordinate the majority of skilled care to home health patients. However, a quirk in Medicare law has kept APRNs from signing home health plans of care and from certifying Medicare patients for the home health benefit. These delays in access to home health services inconvenience patients and their families and can result in increased cost to the Medicare system when patients are unnecessarily left in more expensive institutional settings. The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act would address these problems by specifically allowing APRNs and physician assistants to certify home health services. ANA thanks Representatives Schwartz and Walden for their leadership on H.R. 2267 and urges all members of the House to support APRNs and their home health patients by cosponsoring the Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act (H.R. 2267).

To learn more about ANA’s work on the home health care issue, including the Senate companion bill (S. 227) introduced by Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Kent Conrad (D-ND), please visit http://www.rnaction.org/homehealth.

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The American Nurses Association (ANA) is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent and state nurses associations and its organizational affiliates. ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.