



# NATIONAL GRANGE

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*American Values. Hometown Roots.*

Dear Rural Caucus Member,

Rural communities are a vital part of this country, and as you know, living in an isolated area comes with a unique set of benefits and challenges. However, members of these communities should not be penalized for living in rural areas, especially when it comes to health care access. For millions of Americans, access to air medical services can mean the difference between life and death. Much like the Rural Caucus, the National Grange is committed to supporting and protecting these underrepresented communities. We work closely with members across the country to advocate for their livelihood and access to resources.

Today, we're writing you on behalf of our members and the millions of other rural Americans who rely on air ambulance services, which are presently being threatened by proposed legislation. As you are aware, legislation on surprise medical billing is quickly approaching a vote, and the potential consequences of proposed legislation may adversely affect rural emergency response. While we approve of efforts to protect all patients from surprise medical bills, we are very concerned that the rural patients will bear the burden of this legislation as it is now written.

Air ambulances are an essential part of health care for rural Americans, especially in the case of a critical emergency. Currently, approximately 90% of air medical flights are for people in rural areas and more than 85 million Americans can only reach a Level I or II trauma center within 60 minutes if an air ambulance transports them. These centers are often the only locations that can treat severe medical issues with specialized care. If the current surprise billing legislation is passed as written, air ambulance bases across the country will close and patients will die. This legislation will put those in rural areas even further from access to the medical care they need.

As Congress moves towards a vote on surprise medical billing, we encourage you to consider the needs of the rural communities you represent. Whether someone is involved in a trucking, hunting or ATV accident, suffers an occupational injury from farming or mining, or is facing a time-sensitive medical emergency such as a stroke or heart attack, getting to critical care quickly is essential to survival and recovery. While surprise medical billing is an important issue for rural communities and should be addressed, patients should not be caught in the middle nor should they suffer less access because of the proposed solution. We ask that you strongly consider a fix to the potential negative impact on rural health care and access to air medical services as you prepare to vote on surprise billing.

Sincerely,

Betsy Huber, President,  
The National Grange