

**NCCNHR: The National Consumer Voice for Quality
Long-Term Care**

ACTION ALERT!!!

April 20, 2007

The campaign has begun to pass the Elder Justice Act in 2007! Your help is needed!

In past years, the bill came close to passing but failed because of lack of support in the House of Representatives. Therefore, it is extremely important to get members of the House to co-sponsor and support the bill this year.

Please contact your U.S. Representative's office and ask for him or her to co-sponsor the Elder Justice Act, H.R. 1783 sponsored by Rep. Rahm Emanuel and Peter King. Ask them to support this bill because:

- Abuse and neglect of the elderly in long-term care settings are serious problems. (If you can, give a local example that shows this.)
- Abuse and neglect are under-reported; but even so, long-term care ombudsmen across the country receive over 16,000 complaints a year about abuse, gross neglect, and exploitation. (If you have one, substitute a statistic from your state or area that shows the amount of abuse or neglect in your local facilities.)
- The Elder Justice Act will help public agencies combat abuse against all elderly. It is the strongest legislation introduced to protect nursing home residents in the past 20 years.

Tell your Representative that Rep. Emanuel and Rep. King sent a **Dear Colleague** letter on April 5 asking members to co-sponsor the bill.

There are several ways to contact your Representative:

- Call the U.S. Congress switchboard at 202/224-3121. They will put you through to the Representative's office, and you can give your message to the person who answers the phone.
- Link to your Representative's website at **Representatives**. The member's website will provide a phone number, e-mail address, and mailing address.
- Not sure who your current Representative is? Visit **www.house.gov/writerep/** for a feature that will let you identify your representative by filling in your state and Zip code, then send an e-mail message right from the House website.

The Elder Justice Act provides for a wide range of programs and grants to improve detection and handling of elder abuse. A number of provisions are directly related to protecting residents in nursing homes and/or other long-term care facilities. These would:

- Improve forensic investigation of elder abuse.
- Require the number of adjudicated criminal violations by facilities or their staffs to be published on Nursing Home Compare.
- Provide for a consumer rights information page on Nursing Home Compare.
- Authorize new funding to improve ombudsman capacity and training.
- Authorize a national training institute for long-term care surveyors.
- Require operators and employees of any long-term care facility that receives federal funds to report "any reasonable suspicion of a crime" to law enforcement; establish fines for those who fail to report and protection from retaliation for those who do.
- Require nursing homes that are voluntarily closing to give 60 days notice to the state survey agency and provide a plan to relocate residents.
- Authorize a report to recommend legislation or administrative action to establish a national criminal background check system for nursing home workers.
- Authorize a study on establishing a national nurse aide registry.

The Elder Justice Act (S.1070) is sponsored in the Senate by Senators Orrin Hatch and Blanche Lincoln.