

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 25, 2009

**PROTECT PATIENT SAFETY, QUALITY AND COORDINATED CRITICAL  
CARE FOR HELICOPTER AIR AMBULANCE FLIGHTS**

Dear Colleague:

We are inviting you to join on as a cosponsor of the Helicopter Medical Services Patient Safety, Protection and Coordination Act (H.R. 978). The HMS Patient Safety Act will ensure that patient safety, quality patient care and the coordination of helicopter medical services (HMS) are properly overseen by state emergency medical services (EMS) and public health authorities.

Critically ill or injured patients requiring medical transport are among the most vulnerable patients treated in the medical system. Assuring them timely and life-saving medical care and safe medical transport, regardless of venue (scene to hospital or between hospitals), is paramount. Regulatory oversight to protect patient interests in both air and ground ambulances is an essential function and responsibility of state EMS and public health authorities.

While states clearly are empowered to oversee ground medical transportation, state oversight over helicopter medical services is less defined. In the past few years, the appropriate boundary between state and federal oversight of HMS has been undermined. Although there is general agreement that the federal government regulates the aviation aspects of HMS and the states regulate the medical aspects, there is a lack of clarity between these two spheres and this threatens patient safety and the quality of patient care and impedes the proper coordination of services.

Air ambulances are not and should not simply be air taxis. Patients who are critically ill or injured – and thus require helicopter medical services – must be transported in a safe manner and receive high quality critical care during flight. It is imperative that Congress clarify the ability of states to govern helicopter air ambulances within their boundaries (just as they currently do for ground ambulances) while continuing to recognize the important federal role in aviation oversight.

We strongly believe that this is timely and necessary legislation that is in the best interest of protecting patient care and safety. Please do not hesitate to contact Erik Komendant (Rep. Jason Altmire) at (202) 225-2565 or Caleb Overdorff (Rep. Candice Miller) at (202) 225-2106 if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jason Altmire  
Member of Congress



Candice Miller  
Member of Congress