

Mahoney Introduces Patient Safety and Protection Act of 2007

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(Washington, DC) - Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16) today will introduce the Patient Safety and Protection Act of 2007 to prevent individuals with histories of substantiated abuse or criminal backgrounds from working at long-term care facilities by creating a nationwide system of background checks. Companion legislation was introduced by U.S. Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI) and U.S. Senator Peter Domenici (R-MI) last month. The Senate Special Committee on Aging headed by Chairman Kohl will hold a hearing today to address the issue of elder abuse and highlight the importance of the bill.

"In every state, the pilot programs that have been established are working well. We must move to finish the job and translate these pilot programs into a comprehensive background check system that covers the entire country," said Chairman Kohl. "We need to keep predators out of our system, not just prosecute them after they have ruined people's lives."

"We have a responsibility to ensure that our seniors in nursing homes and others in long-term care facilities are protected. This legislation would help create a national clearinghouse to prevent workers with criminal backgrounds and histories of abuse from working at facilities that care for country's most vulnerable. The pilot programs currently underway have already demonstrated considerable success in preventing dangerous individuals from working at nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. This legislation would build on that success by providing better protection for our friends and family who are entrusted to the care of others," said Congressman Tim Mahoney.

The Patient Safety and Protection Act is based on a seven-state pilot program established by the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 to examine ways in which states can implement systems to cost-effectively screen applicants for employment in long-term care facilities. The program, which will conclude in September, has already succeeded in identifying and excluding over 5,000 applicants with a criminal history from employment at long-term care facilities in these states.

Forty-one states, including Florida, already require a criminal background check. The bill would allow these states to integrate their screening systems into one streamlined process and add a federal background check through the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System. Providers would be able to bill Medicare and Medicaid for the cost of the national background check.

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