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LARSON COMMENDS RULE REQUIRING SPRINKLERS IN U.S. NURSING HOMES

Step in right direction □ more action still needed

HARTFORD ♦ U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-1) today applauded the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for proposing a rule that would require all nursing homes serving Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries to install sprinkler systems.

After a February 2003 fire at Greenwood Health Center in Hartford claimed the lives of sixteen residents, Larson became a national leader in the effort to ensure all nursing homes have an automatic sprinkler system. Larson is the author of the Nursing Home Fire Safety Act (H.R. 4491) that would establish a loan program and need-based grant program to aid nursing homes in tackling the high cost of installing sprinklers. The bill also expresses the sense of Congress that every nursing home in America should be equipped with full sprinkler systems within five years and that CMS should move quickly to adopt stronger fire safety standards.

♦ This action by CMS is a step in the right direction, but the costs associated with upgrading still remain a burden for older facilities. That is why the Nursing Home Fire Safety Act remains so important. Congress must step up and offer assistance like low interest loans or grants to the neediest facilities to meet this challenge and protect our families. I will continue to work on

behalf of our nation's most vulnerable citizens to ensure that all nursing home facilities have sprinkler systems in a swift and reasonable timeframe.

The proposed rule, published in the October 27, 2006 Federal Register, would require every long term care facility to install an approved, supervised automatic sprinkler system in accordance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidance. It also requests public comment on an appropriate phase-in timeframe for the installation of sprinkler systems. Public comments will be accepted until December 26, 2006. The final rule will be published after consideration of public comments.

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For more information on nursing home fire safety, visit <http://www.house.gov/larson/sprinklers.htm>