

**SENATOR
KENT CONRAD**
DEMOCRAT - NORTH DAKOTA

December 12, 2011

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Senator Works to Bring More Docs to Rural America
Conrad Looks to Extend Program that Fills Shortage of Health Care Professionals

Washington – Senator Kent Conrad today introduced bipartisan legislation to extend the Conrad State 30 program, a national initiative he launched 17 years ago to bring doctors to areas plagued by a shortage of physicians.

"We face a critical shortage of doctors in rural America today. Many communities in rural parts of North Dakota — and across the nation — are unable to attract qualified physicians. As a result, families are forced to travel great distances for routine health care. That is unacceptable," Senator Conrad said.

Senator Conrad created the popular State 30 program through legislation he first introduced in 1994. Under the program, foreign-born but American-trained doctors provide health care to people living in underserved communities for at least three years in exchange for an extension of their stay in the United States. Since its inception, the Conrad 30 Program has been extended multiple times and brought more than 9,000 doctors to rural and underserved communities in all 50 states.

The legislation introduced by Senator Conrad today calls for permanent authorization of the Conrad 30 program. The legislation also provides additional incentives for more doctors to participate in the program. In addition, the legislation provides a way for the number of waiver slots available to states to increase beyond the current 30.

The reauthorization bill also includes new provisions that provide greater protections to Conrad 30 physicians. Senator Conrad drafted those provisions after reading an article in the *Las Vegas Sun* last year that detailed physician abuse by certain Nevada employers. Under the new provisions, doctors can exit their contracts with their Conrad 30 employers, as long as they agree to an additional year of service in another rural or underserved area.

"Conrad 30 has improved access to quality health care for Americans in every state for almost two decades. We must extend this vital program so that it can continue to allow patients to access vital services right in their hometowns," Senator Conrad said.

The physician shortage in America is a growing crisis. By 2020, some projections show the nation may fall short by as many as 200,000 doctors. This shortage will be felt hardest in rural areas in North Dakota — and across the nation.

Senator Conrad's reauthorization bill is co-sponsored by Senator Jerry Moran (R-Kan).