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Legislative Update on Safe Patient Handling September 26, 2008

HR 378 Nurse and Patient Safety and Protection Act Remains in Committee

The national bill **HR 378 “Nurse and Patient Safety and Protection Act of 2007”** remains in committee. The bill for safe patient handling was originally introduced two years ago on September 26, 2006, as HR 6182 “Nurse and Patient Safety and Protection Act of 2006,” by U.S. Representative John Conyers, Jr., Democrat, Michigan District 14, calling for an amendment of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 to reduce injuries to patients, nurses, and other health care providers with a safe patient handling standard.

Representative John Conyers, Jr., re-introduced the bill as HR 378 “Nurse and Patient Safety and Protection Act of 2007” on January 10, 2007. HR 378 would "direct the Secretary of Labor to issue an occupational safety and health standard to reduce injuries to patients, direct-care registered nurses, and other health care providers by establishing a safe patient handling standard."

If HR 378 is successful, a Federal Safe Patient Handling Standard, calling for “all health care facilities” to comply, will be enacted “to prevent musculoskeletal disorders for direct-care registered nurses and other health care providers working in health care facilities. This standard shall require the elimination of manual lifting of patients by direct-care registered nurses and other health care providers, through the use of mechanical devices, except during a declared state of emergency.”

The last action on HR 378 was over a year ago. HR 378 was referred on May 9, 2007, by two House Committees, the Committee on Education and Labor and the Committee on Workforce Protections, to the House Subcommittee on Workforce Protections. As of this date, September 26, 2008, HR 378 remains in the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections where it has not yet had a hearing, and no hearing is scheduled.

There is one co-sponsor to date of the Nurse and Patient Safety and Protection Act. On June 3, 2008, U.S. Representative Joe Sestak, Democrat, Pennsylvania District 7, (202) 225-2011, joined Representative John Conyers, Jr., to co-sponsor HR 378 for the protection of healthcare workers and dependent persons in their care against devastating injuries directly caused by manual patient lifting..

From a call this date, September 26, 2008, to the House Education and Labor Committee office, (202) 225-3725, the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections has not acted on HR 378. And, with Congress looking to adjourn for this session, the Nurse and Patient Safety and Protection Act is not likely to be acted on this year. The date for Congress to re-convene will be per call of the Chair.

Legislators wanting to co-sponsor HR 378 Nurse and Patient Safety and Protection Act, or others wishing to express support, can contact Representative John Conyers, Jr., (202) 225-5126, John.Conyers@mail.house.gov, and Mr. Joel Segal, Legislative Assistant on Health Policy, (202) 225-5126, Joel.Segal@mail.house.gov.

For links to the status, complete history and text of HR 378, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

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