



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

<http://finance.senate.gov>

MEMORANDUM

To: Reporters and Editors
Re: GAO report on nursing home quality of care
Da: Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2006

Sen. Chuck Grassley today made the following comment on a new report from the Government Accountability Office, "Nursing Homes/Despite Increased Oversight, Challenges Remain in Ensuring High-Quality Care and Resident Safety," GAO-06-117. Grassley is chairman of the Committee on Finance, with jurisdiction over Medicare and Medicaid, former chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, and a long-time advocate for improved nursing home quality of care.

"It bothers me that CMS says nursing home initiatives compete with other priorities. The minute we look away, we lose momentum, and conditions backslide. We can't let that happen again like it did before. That's not to denigrate the good progress made. But we need faster, sustained progress. A lack of oversight by CMS years ago is what led to the steady decline in nursing home quality. Inspectors were often too cozy with the nursing home staff, inspections were too predictable, people weren't finding problems or were afraid to report them, and when there were problems identified, punishments were a slap on the wrist. If state surveyors are missing serious deficiencies in the quality of care, then CMS has not yet achieved the necessary level of improvement in its oversight of that process, period. So CMS needs to make high-quality care for nursing home residents a consistent, high priority and get the job done once and for all. I'll keep after CMS to make sure the job gets done."

The report will be available today at finance.senate.gov.