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For Immediate Release
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**National Association for the Support of Long Term Care
Applauds Law Stopping Therapy Caps/Continuing Fee Schedule Payments**

The National Association for the Support of Long Term Care (NASL) today applauded enactment of the *Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006*, which was signed into law by President Bush. The new law maintains access to vital medical and rehabilitative therapy services for Medicare beneficiaries, particularly for those receiving care in long-term care facilities.

Access to care for our nation's oldest, sickest and frailest citizens was jeopardized by looming cuts in provider payments and the imposition of an arbitrary cap on therapy services. The new law (H.R. 6111), which cleared Congress December 9, extends the therapy cap exceptions process through 2007 and averts a proposed 5 percent cut in the physician fee schedule.

While acknowledging a bipartisan compromise that led to passage during the waning hours of the 109th Congress, NASL President Tom Jeffers noted that Congress will need to deal with these issues again next year. "This law is an important but temporary solution for America's seniors and the dedicated professionals who care for them," said Jeffers. "We hope to work with legislators and federal regulators in developing long-term solutions for these issues," he said.

A clinically-based therapy cap exceptions process has been in place this year that allowed beneficiaries requiring medically necessary care above the cap to apply for additional care, but it was only authorized for the 2006 calendar year. If Congress had not acted, rigid caps would have been imposed January 1, 2007, and Medicare beneficiaries most in need of therapy services would have suffered. Patients with stroke, hip fracture, Parkinson's disease and other conditions that require extensive rehabilitation likely would have been most affected.

NASL worked with more than 40 patient and provider organizations to ensure that the therapy cap exceptions process was extended.

The new law also averted a proposed cut in the Medicare physician fee schedule. This has become a perennial problem because of the flawed sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula that ties payments to health care providers to the nation's economy rather than to the costs of caring for America's seniors.

"We applaud the enactment of this legislation into law," said Jeffers, "and we are ready to roll up our sleeves and help find permanent solutions to ensure access to care."

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NASL is a trade association of ancillary providers of products and services to the post-acute industry, representing its members on Capitol Hill in legislative and regulatory issues that impact the quality of care to patients in the long-term care setting. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Peter Clendenin at NASL, 1321 Duke Street, Suite 304, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3563, (703) 549-8500, clendenin@nasl.org.

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