

## February 03, 2003- Sanchez, Tancredo Introduce Nurse Loan Forgiveness Program

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Creates Monetary Incentive for Individuals Entering the Nursing Profession

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In a bipartisan effort to generate an increase in registered nurses nationwide, U.S. Representative Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) joined Tom Tancredo (R-CO) to introduce H.R. 501, The Nurse Loan Forgiveness Act of 2003. This legislation would establish a loan forgiveness program to create an incentive for individuals entering the nursing profession.

"Our country is facing a real crisis that will have devastating effects on the quality of service the health care community will be able to provide," said Sanchez. "As our nation's baby boom generation begins to retire, we will see a dramatic increase over time for health services as students choosing nursing as a career are diminishing. It is my hope that this temporary program will help to alleviate some of the projected effects of the increased need of our population."

H.R. 501 would establish a student loan forgiveness program for nurses to encourage young people to enter and continue in the nursing profession. As entry-level nursing schools continue to decline, this legislation would provide an incentive to study, work, and more importantly, stay in the nursing profession. In addition, this bill would enhance patient care and create a new generation of health care professionals.

For nurses that stay in a medical facility or approved health care setting for at least five years, they are eligible for up to \$17,000 in loan forgiveness. This is a ten-year program; established during this time of crisis - a time when our aging family members, friends and loved ones may not have the care they deserve or require.

"I have spoken with health care professionals in my district that tell me that this is the No. 1 issue facing them in the years to come," added Sanchez. "

Across the United States, health care facilities are experiencing a loss of full-time registered nurses. As aging nurses retire, there are not enough persons willing to enter the field to replace them. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing estimates that within the next 10 years, the average age of registered nurses is forecasted to be 45.4 years old, with more than 40 percent of the registered nurse work force expected to be older than 50. Currently, there are more than 126,000 hospital nursing positions that need to be filled.

Official co-sponsors of the bill are as follows: Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA), Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-KS), Rep. Mark Souder (R-IN), Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Rep. Eleanor Holmes-Norton (D-DC), Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA), Rep. Patrick Tiberi (R-OH), Rep. Dale Kildee (D-MI), Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), Rep. Martin Frost (D-TX), Rep. Michael McNulty (D-NY), Rep. Jose Serrano (D-NY), and Rep. Tim Holden (D-PA).