

March 6, 2012

Conrad Bill Helps Those Suffering from Kidney Disease

Senator's Legislation Increases Patients Access to Life Saving Care

Washington— Senator Kent Conrad introduced legislation today to help improve access to life saving care for patients suffering from chronic kidney disease.

"This legislation recognizes the importance of patient choice, access to care, and educational efforts to assist the more than 400,000 Americans with kidney failure to manage their disease and understand the treatment options," Senator Conrad said.

Known as the "Kidney Disease Equitable Access, Prevention, and Research Act of 2012," Senator Conrad's legislation takes important steps to improve Medicare benefits for individuals with kidney disease while also increasing preventive care programs. Specifically, the legislation:

- Ensures patients maintain their ability to choose to retain their private insurance options, even after they qualify for Medicare by virtue of their disease state.
- Improves access to preventive and educational services by expanding access to coverage for kidney disease education services.
- Addresses barriers to receiving life-sustaining treatment, including transportation issues and factors that lead to disparities among minority populations.
- Calls on the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services to report gaps in service to support ongoing efforts to improve the Medicare End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) program.

ESRD is the name given to kidney failure so advanced that it cannot be reversed. For the more than 400,000 Americans living with ESRD, access to expensive dialysis treatments can mean the difference between life and death.

"The legislation that I introduced today will support vital research and improve the programs that assist patients suffering from the most debilitating form of kidney disease," Senator Conrad said. "We must continue to help these patients manage their disease. We must do all we can to help improve their quality of life."

Several thousand North Dakotans live with diabetes and high blood pressure, which are both precursors to possible kidney failure.