



Dear Mr. Blumenthal:

On behalf of the 255 member nursing facilities of the Louisiana Nursing Home Association (LNHA), I would like to respond to your recent article concerning contributions for Governor Jindal's presidential campaign. The article is unfair and unbalanced...and light on substance.

It is curious that the article focuses on "empty beds," yet does not reference any improvement regarding the reduction of bed capacity. LNHA, working in concert with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, succeeded in reducing the number of overall nursing facility beds from 40,000 to 35,000 over a 10-year period. This represents an equivalent of 40 fewer nursing facilities.

Furthermore, every nursing facility program in the country has a rate reimbursement methodology that contains a cost component that factors in capital costs. In Louisiana, nursing facilities are not paid for empty beds. Medicaid pays a predetermined amount per month for each resident cared for by a facility. A portion of that amount contains the aforementioned capital cost component. In Louisiana, it is based on fair rental value. If someone is not residing in a bed, then the facility receives no payment. Louisiana's nursing facilities are reimbursed in the bottom quartile in the country.

The mission of the Louisiana Nursing Home Association is to offer its members the necessary tools to enhance their ability to provide quality of care and quality of life to their residents. One of LNHA's responsibilities is to advocate on behalf of its membership, addressing policymakers, regulators and legislators and sharing our concerns regarding proposed rules and legislation. It is neither illegal, nor wrong, that member associations, as well as individuals, exercise the right to advocate on their behalf. It is impossible for any one legislator or policymaker to be aware of all the complexities and intricacies of each piece of legislation or regulation.

Campaign finance is a reality. In 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that campaign finance is "political free speech" and noted that the government cannot regulate free speech. Free speech is among the most cherished rights and it should be protected.

I imagine that even journalists have associations upon which they rely. Accuracy in reporting should not be a lost art.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Donchess
Executive Director