

UNITED STATES SENATOR • IOWA
CHUCK GRASSLEY

RANKING MEMBER • SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

<http://grassley.senate.gov>
press_office@grassley.senate.gov

Contact: Jill Kozeny, 202/224-1308
Jill Gerber, 202/224-6522

MEMORANDUM

To: Reporters and Editors
Fr: Jill Gerber, 202/224-6522
Re: nursing home staffing
Da: Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2002

Sen. Chuck Grassley, ranking member of the Committee on Finance, has a long history of working to improve the government's oversight of the nation's nursing homes. In 2000, as chairman of the Special Committee on Aging, he secured the release of the first part of a nursing home staffing study, with an original due date of Jan. 1, 1992. The study's first part linked low staffing levels to poor care for nursing home residents. The study's second part is nearing completion; a draft was the subject of a New York Times story this week. Grassley made the following comment on the second part of the staffing study.

"The draft study validates what too many families already know: The link between low staffing levels and poor care is staring us in the face. We can't look away. But I'm not convinced more money for the nursing home industry is the solution. The nursing home industry receives \$38 billion a year from the federal government and additional billions of dollars from the states to care for 1.5 million nursing home residents. Is that enough money to get the job done? Is that enough money for nursing homes to hire enough staff to give good care? Are mandatory staffing levels necessary? These are complex questions, and we need answers to these questions before we move forward. It's important not to over-simplify with a one-size-fits-all solution. Some nursing homes make things work under the current system and some don't. If we don't look before we leap, we might do more damage than good."