

UNITED STATES SENATOR • IOWA  
**CHUCK GRASSLEY**  
RANKING MEMBER • SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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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 abuse  
Da: Monday, March 4, 2002

A new report from the General Accounting Office (GAO), requested by Sens. Chuck Grassley and John Breaux, finds that law enforcement plays only a minor role in investigating and prosecuting cases of physical and sexual abuse of nursing home residents. The report is the subject of a Special Committee on Aging hearing today. 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, beginning in 1998 under his chairmanship of the Special Committee on Aging. Grassley made the following comment on the new GAO report.

“Federal law says nursing homes have to keep or improve the quality of life of each resident. A nursing home that allows its residents to suffer physical and sexual abuse is failing to meet one of its most important obligations. Today's report shows that not only do some nursing homes subject residents to abuse, but they also add insult to injury by failing to notify police when abuse occurs. This is shocking, and it's unacceptable. A crime is a crime, whether it occurs in a school, a park or a nursing home. If a teacher beat up a student, everyone would demand justice. The same should be true when a nursing home employee beats up a resident.

“In the short term, Administrator Tom Scully of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services immediately should implement the GAO's recommendations to better protect nursing home residents. The recommendations appear to be cost-free. With aggressive oversight from Congress, CMS has made some progress toward improving nursing home quality. That trend has to continue.

“Next, Congress and the Administration need to find ways to improve nursing home staffing. Nursing homes clearly need staff who won't abuse residents. It's important to note that many nursing homes make the current system work without quality or abuse problems. But we need to fix the situation for all the others that don't make the current system work. I look forward to addressing the nursing home staffing issue in the coming weeks.”

