

Nancy Johnson



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Johnson Introduces Bill to Bring Health Record-Keeping into the Digital Age

Health Chair Says I.T. Can Improve Care, Save Lives, & Reduce Costs

WASHINGTON, DC – Congresswoman Nancy Johnson today introduced legislation that will improve the quality of care Americans receive through national adoption of electronic medical records and e-prescribing systems. The bill has 31 co-sponsors, including House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee Chairman Nathan Deal (R-GA).

By moving from paper files and prescriptions into the digital age, the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Chairman said her new legislation will help create systems that prevent harmful prescription errors and costly duplicate tests, eliminate lost medical records, simplify our administrative system, and significantly improve the treatment of chronic illnesses and our own knowledge of what works.

“Information technology, e-prescribing and electronic medical records have the ability to improve health care quality, reduce errors and save lives,” Johnson said. “America’s health care system has lagged behind other sectors in maximizing its use of cutting-edge information systems, but now we are moving full speed ahead. This legislation will make sure the national health IT coordinator’s post is a permanent one, and it will overcome some of the key obstacles that have slowed our progress toward adoption of a national, interoperable electronic system.”

“I’m pleased so many have joined in the effort to bring technology to the service of patients and health care providers. Through systems that securely and confidentially transmit digital prescriptions and health records, we can improve the quality of health care in America as well as reduce costs,” Johnson said.

Johnson has long led the effort in Congress to bring health care into the 21st century through health IT and electronic medical records. In July 2003, Johnson introduced legislation (HR 2915, 108th Congress) creating a senior level administration post to coordinate the formation of a health information infrastructure, a goal later achieved through a May 2004 executive order. Dr. David Brailer was appointed by the President to serve as the nation’s first National Coordinator for Health Information Technology.

Johnson's new legislation, the "Health Information Technology Promotion Act of 2005," makes this critical position permanent in the law and clearly outlines its ongoing roles and responsibilities to coordinate federal health IT efforts.

It also tackles key obstacles that are slowing the growth, use and confidential exchange of clinical health information. The following reforms conform to recommendations of the bipartisan, congressionally appointed Commission on Systemic Interoperability.

- **Promotes common sense cooperation between doctors and hospitals.** Johnson's bill corrects the current law that prevents hospitals and group practices from providing physicians with hardware, software, training or IT support services.
- **Protects patient privacy by creating uniform information security standards.** Johnson's bill directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to recommend to Congress a single privacy standard that consolidates the many state and federal privacy laws. This standard will maintain the same strong privacy protections now in place while making the electronic exchange of medical records possible.
- **Certifies new technologies to ensure nationwide interoperability.** Johnson's bill provides for the certification of health information technologies so they will meet new standards of interoperability, preventing the investment in millions of dollars in different information systems that can't talk to each other.
- **Updates diagnosis coding systems for the digital age.** Johnson's bill directs the Secretary to adopt a new diagnosis coding system, medical shorthand used in health records and claims processing. The current system is 30 years old and does not reflect modern medical technology and knowledge.

Johnson's bill also requires the Secretary to report to Congress within two years on the progress of the public-private American Health Information Community initiative, as well as the development of a strategic plan to coordinate the implementation of a health IT infrastructure.

Johnson's legislation is supported by leading national advocates for national adoption of health information technology, including:

- ✓ E-Health Initiative
- ✓ Disease Management Association of America
- ✓ American Health Information Management Association
- ✓ National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
- ✓ American Medical Group Association
- ✓ Healthcare Leadership Council
- ✓ Federation of American Hospitals

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