<Date>

The Hon. John/Jane Doe

U.S. House of Representatives/Senate

<Address>

<City/State/Zip Code>

Dear Rep./Sen. Doe:

On November 17, 2016, **[CHAMBER OF COMMERCE/COMMUNITY NAME]** will join the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health, the **[INSERT STATE OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH NAME]** and rural health advocates throughout **[INSERT STATE NAME]** and the nation in celebrating National Rural Health Day. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase rural America while bringing to light some of the unique healthcare challenges facing America’s 62 million citizens.

We hope you will take some time on November 17 to celebrate National Rural Health Day as well! ***[NOTE:* This is where chambers/communities could share any National Rural Health Day celebration plans and possibly invite the Representative/Senator to the celebration. Even if you don’t have something planned, you could invite the Representative/Senator to come and tour a health facility or other small businesses in your community that day!]**

As someone who represents rural citizens of **[INSERT STATE NAME]** in Congress, you are already well aware of the “Power of Rural”. Our rural communities are wonderful places to live and work; these small towns, farming communities and frontier areas are places where neighbors know each other, listen to each other, respect each other and work together to benefit the greater good. They are also some of the best places to start a business and test your “entrepreneurial spirit”. These communities provide the rest of the country with a wealth of services and commodities, and they are the economic engine that has helped the United State become the world economic power it is today.

But rural communities also face unique healthcare needs; today more than ever, we must address accessibility issues, a lack of healthcare providers, the needs of an aging population suffering from a greater number of chronic conditions, and larger percentages of un- and underinsured citizens. Consider the following:

* Rural residents spend more on health care out of pocket than their urban counterparts; on average, rural residents pay for 40% of their health care costs out of pocket compared with the urban share of one-third. One in five rural residents spends more than $1,000 out of pocket per year (Ziller, Coburn & Yousefian, 2006).
* For persons of all ages visiting their healthcare provider, travel time is longer for rural patients – 14% of rural patients traveled more than 30 minutes, while only 10% of urban patients did so (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2006).

Rural hospitals are perhaps the most critical resource utilized by citizens to meet their healthcare needs. These hospitals typically serve as the health and human service “anchor” or “hub” of their communities, offering residents an array of services and providers in one location. They are also frequently one of the largest, if not the largest, employers in the community – meaning the financial stability of a small rural hospital also has a tremendous impact on a community’s *economic* health (Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania, 2009).

Because rural hospitals and providers care for a larger percentage of patients per capita than their urban and suburban counterparts, it should come as no surprise that funding cuts being considered to federal rural health programs would do more damage proportionally than similar cuts to urban/suburban programs. That is why we believe it is imperative for Congress and the President, at the very least, to continue funding existing rural health programs at their current levels – and we strongly urge your support for programs that bring physical and economic security to rural citizens of **[INSERT STATE]**.

As we use National Rural Health Day as an opportunity to “Celebrate the Power of Rural”, we strongly urge your support for programs that provide physical and economic security to rural citizens of your district.

Sincerely,