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McMorris Rodgers Votes to Protect Healthcare Options in Northeastern Washington

(Washington, D.C.) Today, Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers voted against a bill that threatens healthcare access and choices in Northeastern Washington.

“Increasing access to affordable, quality healthcare is one of my top priorities,” McMorris Rodgers said. “We already have a shortage of doctors and other medical professionals in Eastern Washington. It’s important not to force more doctors away and make healthcare coverage even more expensive.”

McMorris Rodgers voted against the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act, which intends to expand mental health coverage. While that is a worthwhile goal, in order to pay for the increased coverage, the bill cuts off federal Medicaid or Medicare payments to hospitals that are more than 40% physician-owned. This would mean hospitals like the Wenatchee Valley Medical Center couldn’t expand or build new clinics. This affects three Wenatchee Valley Medical Center-owned clinics in Okanogan County:

- The Omak Clinic which houses 14 physicians and has specialists who travel from the Wenatchee Valley Hospital on regular basis
- North Valley Family Medicine in Tonasket which includes six family practice physicians and a practitioner who specializes in women’s health care
- North Valley Family Medicine in Oroville which has three board certified physicians

Democratic leaders in the House rejected Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers’ and Congressman Doc Hastings’ efforts to protect physician owned hospitals.

“Not only would today’s bill limit access to healthcare, it may actually decrease mental health coverage, instead of expand it,” McMorris Rodgers said. “The bill increases mental health insurance mandates, which may force some employers to drop mental health coverage altogether. The added regulation and expense is not needed, especially when Washington State law already requires some of the most extensive mental health coverage in the country.”