TO THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED:

We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of
the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled, respectfully
represent and petition as follows:

WHEREAS, Four hundred thousand Americans have irreversible kidney
failure, a condition called "End Stage Renal Disease" (ESRD). ESRD is
fatal unless a patient receives either dialysis or kidney
transplantation. Since transplantation is limited due to the shortage
of donor organs, seventy-five percent of ESRD patients must undergo
regular and on-going dialysis treatment for the rest of their lives.
In Washington State approximately 16,000 residents have ESRD; and

WHEREAS, Today's ESRD patients are older and sicker due primarily
to the aging of the population, and the growing incidence of diabetes
and high blood pressure, fueled by the obesity epidemic. ESRD
disproportionately impacts African-American and Hispanic individuals;
and
WHEREAS, Most patients with ESRD lack access to education programs about their disease that would allow them to make informed choices about their treatment and learn important self-management skills to improve their quality of life; and

WHEREAS, According to the most recent data available, less than one percent of all ESRD patients use home dialysis because of the barriers patients face in accessing this option. Home dialysis can improve a patient's quality of life by allowing him or her to remain employed and participate in other activities that promote well-being; and

WHEREAS, There is no coordinated effort between federal and state governments, health care professionals, dialysis providers, educators, and patient advocates to develop programs to identify members of high-risk populations and develop culturally appropriate community-based approaches for improving the treatment of chronic kidney disease, which would lead to fewer cases of ESRD; and

WHEREAS, Since 1972, Congress made a commitment to ESRD patients by providing coverage for the lifesaving therapy and dialysis, through the Medicare program. Medicare provides for the care of approximately seventy-five percent of patients receiving dialysis. Improvements are needed to continue to ensure access to high quality treatment for ESRD patients. Better care for patients means a better quality of life, improved rehabilitation, fewer medications, and fewer hospitalizations; and

WHEREAS, The rate paid by Medicare for ESRD services is the only Medicare prospective payment system without an annual update mechanism to adjust for increases. This means providers must ask Congress for increases, rather than relying on the Department of Health and Human Services to make routine, data-driven decisions on payment adequacy. In the past twelve years, there have been only two increases in the ESRD composite rate, totaling 3.6 percent, to cover inflation, new technologies, and other costs, such as nurses' salaries. When adjusted for inflation, the average Medicare payment for dialysis treatment has been reduced from $138 in 1973 to $38 in 2000. The program is no longer sustainable under the current reimbursement structure;

NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully request that the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate enact H.R. 1298 and S. 635, known as the "Kidney Care Quality Improvement Act of 2005." The Act will modernize and update treatment
of ESRD by adding Medicare coverage for kidney disease patient education services, improve the home dialysis benefit, and provide for an annual update for the Medicare ESRD composite rate. A demonstration project for an outcomes-based ESRD reimbursement system, as well as a study of barriers to accessing the home dialysis benefit, will lead to future improvements in delivery of care. A chronic kidney disease demonstration project will increase public awareness about the disease, with the goal of lowering the number of persons who will need kidney dialysis.

BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately transmitted to the Honorable George W. Bush, President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the State of Washington.

--- END ---