



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 6, 2004

NEWS

Contact: Holly Lubart

(717) 221-7935

**PHCA Praises Formation of Independent National Commission
To Help Improve Care in America's Long Term Care Facilities**
*Co-Chairs Bob Kerrey and Newt Gingrich Bring Bi-Partisan Credibility to Effort;
PHCA President Urges Renewed Focus on Pennsylvania-Specific Quality Legislation*

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA) today praised the formation in Washington, D.C. of a new independent national commission, co-chaired by former Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey (D-NE) and former Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, which will recommend goals to help improve care in the nation's long term care facilities, and assess the long term care profession's own ongoing quality improvement efforts. The National Commission for Quality Long Term Care will rely on advice from recognized health care experts, and its recommendations and conclusions will be based upon independent information and data.

"Yesterday's announcement is another solid step forward in our profession's ongoing effort to ensure our frail, elderly and disabled in Pennsylvania and across the nation receive quality long term care today and for the long term," stated Alan G. Rosenbloom, President and CEO of PHCA. "Senator Kerrey and Speaker Gingrich bring enormous bipartisan credibility to this effort, and we welcome their independent review of our profession's quality improvement efforts."

Senator Kerrey, also a former Nebraska governor and member of the bipartisan 9-11 Commission, and Speaker Gingrich, who currently heads the Gingrich Group in Washington, D.C., will preside over a distinguished group of members that also include Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne, Virginia Governor Mark Warner, AARP CEO Bill Novelli, former Minnesota Senator David Durenberger, and others.

Rosenbloom said the provider community took a bold step in 2002 by launching its own initiative to improve care quality, "Quality First," which called on long term care providers to make a voluntary, organization-wide commitment to quality improvement. "Since that time, nursing homes and other long term care settings have expanded their quality improvement activities, and committed to a new and higher level of accountability to their residents, clients, staff and communities," he said.

The PHCA President and CEO said he was hopeful a greater focus on care quality improvement in Washington could help advance care quality improvement efforts in Harrisburg. The Long Term Care Quality Improvement Act (HB 2504), sponsored by Rep. Maureen Gingrich (R-Lebanon), is now pending in the General Assembly. The bill, based largely upon the PHCA's "Quality for Life" long term care improvement initiative, would establish a Long Term Care Quality Improvement Council, and provide for a system of data collection, benchmarking, and dissemination of nursing facility quality performance reports.

"Achieving simply a 'minimum standard' of care in our long term care facilities is not good enough – nor should it ever be," continued Rosenbloom. "Because the demand for long term care services will grow both in facility settings and in alternative settings such as home care and assisted living, it is essential for our state and federal governments to pass laws that will help complement our quality initiatives – and that will strengthen, adequately fund and properly staff our entire long term care system. We look forward to examining the work of the National Commission, and are confident Bob Kerrey and Newt Gingrich will provide objective viewpoints and recommendations we can embrace and implement."

In further recognition of Pennsylvania's long term quality care achievements, Beverly Healthcare East Mountain in Wilkes-Barre, Beverly Healthcare Richland in Johnstown, and Beverly Healthcare York Terrace in Pottsville are 2004 recipients of a Step I AHCA/NCAL Quality Award by having demonstrated its commitment to initiating improvement programs and measuring their results. The awards consist of an entry level Step I Award, a more rigorous Step II Award and a comprehensive Step III Award, much like the rigorous qualifications of the prestigious Baldrige Awards that recognized excellence in performance.

PHCA is a statewide membership services organization representing approximately 300 long-term care and senior service providers throughout the Commonwealth. Additional information about PHCA is available by calling 717-221-1800 or visiting www.phca.org.

#####