In May 2014, Congressman Glenn (GT) Thompson (R-PA) and Congressman G.K. Butterfield (D-NC) introduced a piece of legislation to the US House of Representatives titled **HR 4755: Access to Rehabilitation Therapy Act of 2014**. This legislation offers an important opportunity for the inclusion of recreational therapy as a recognized modality for the three hour guideline under Medicare. It is essential, however, that recreational therapy practitioners join the effort by encouraging their elected US Congressional Representative to support the bill.

Currently, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) determines which therapies in inpatient rehabilitation facilities (IRF) qualify to meet the intensity of therapy requirement and has limited the choices to physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and orthotics/prosthetics. Essentially, to qualify for IRF services, patients must be able to participate in medically necessary active treatment three hours a day, five days a week. Since 2010, CMS has not allowed IRFs to use recreational therapy to satisfy this requirement. In April 2014, the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, along with a coalition of allied health stakeholders, contacted Congressman Thompson to support the introduction of legislation to “restore the reliance on the professional judgment of the treating physician and rehabilitation team” when determining the mix of medically-necessary therapies (including recreational therapy) to meet the needs of their patients in the IRF setting. If signed into law, HR 4755 will amend the Social Security Act to include Recreational Therapy among therapy modalities that can constitute an intensive rehabilitation therapy program.

The legislation is an important step in ensuring that patients in IRFs have access to a broader range of disciplines in responding to medical and rehabilitation needs. The physicians and treatment teams of IRFs need the flexibility to determine the best mix of services. Those services should include recreational therapy along with physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and orthotics and prosthetics.

Your profession and its clients need your active engagement to ensure the success of this effort. It is only through the actions of every recreational therapist that this initiative can be successful.

**What you can do**

Take 10 minutes of your time by:

- Visiting the American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA) website [https://www.atra-online.com/](https://www.atra-online.com/) where you will be able to 1) read the bill and supporting documents, and 2) identify your Congressperson.

- Use the email template created by the ATRA Public Policy Committee to contact your representative. This effort will be successful only with the support of the entire profession.

Without your support, consumers of Intensive Rehabilitation Facilities will not have access to essential recreational therapy services. Please act on behalf of our consumers.

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Richard Williams, EdD, LTR/CTRS

**Guest editorial**

**Access to Inpatient Rehabilitation Therapy Act of 2014 (HR 4755)**

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