

Statement of Chairman Larry Craig

Good Morning. Thank you for attending our Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing this morning. I would like to thank the witnesses for agreeing to testify before this committee on Assisted Living in the 21st Century.

Two years ago this Committee held a hearing to gain a better understanding of the emerging industry of assisted living. This emerging industry now has over 30,000 facilities in the United States housing approximately one million people. Since such large numbers of seniors are choosing assisted living facilities, I feel compelled as the new Chairman of the Special Committee on Aging to take a second look at this industry and evaluate efforts to provide quality care to consumers.

I also have a very personal reason for wanting to examine this issue. My in-laws are currently living in an assisted living community. I am grateful that they live in a good environment and receive quality care. The goal for this hearing is to make sure that all residents receive high levels of care.

Two years ago, GAO issued a report to Congress that indicated assisted living facilities did not consistently provide consumers sufficient information to determine whether a particular facility meets their needs.

Because of these results, this Committee asked the assisted living industry to come up with solutions to provide consumers with the best information and care possible. We are here today to evaluate what progress has been made.

Currently, assisted living facilities are not regulated at the federal level. Instead states are responsible for oversight. I believe in most cases states should be permitted to govern without federal mandates. In this case, we must ask whether the states and the industry are doing enough to protect the elderly who rely on assisted living facilities. Today we will hear from both industry and consumer groups who will discuss the current status of assisted living facilities.

I would like to thank the witnesses for agreeing to testify and I would especially like to thank Senator Breaux for his interest in this area. He has been very involved in this issue and continues to work to address concerns. I will need to step away from this hearing and am grateful that Senator Breaux will be here to continue this important hearing.