

July 2, 2009

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- Today, U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) delivered \$333,000 in federal funding to Heritage Valley Health System to help outfit 50 additional physician offices and hospital satellite facilities with electronic health records. Altmire secured this funding through the federal appropriations process. Altmire is the co-chair of the New Democrat Coalition's Health Care Task Force, a coalition of moderate Democrats committed to modernizing America's health care system.

“In medicine, knowledge is power. The more knowledge doctors have about their patient's medical history, the better decisions they can make about how to keep that patient healthy,” Altmire said. **“By giving doctors' immediate access to their patients' complete and up-to-date medical histories, electronic health records provide doctors with the information they need to better care for their patients. I am proud that I could secure funding that will help Heritage Valley Health System expand its Electronic Health Record system so more western Pennsylvanians can benefit from this technology.”**

Heritage Valley Health System's Electronic Health Record program has improved physicians' ability to deliver high-quality, continuous care. With a single handheld device, doctors can now access their patients' complete patient history, along with three years of lab, pathology and radiology reports. Having access to all of this information digitally helps doctors better track their patients' process and make more informed decisions about what course of treatment to pursue next. By integrating e-prescribing technology into their Electronic Health Record program, Heritage Valley Health System has also been able to improve patient safety by eliminating dosage, usage, handwriting and prescription errors.

“On behalf of our Board of Directors, medical staff and employees, we sincerely appreciate the efforts of U.S. Congressman Altmire in obtaining this funding for Heritage Valley Health System,” said Norm Mitry, President and CEO of Heritage Valley Health System. **“This funding will allow us to continue to remain at the forefront of electronic health records technology, which ultimately improves the quality and reduces the cost of medical care for all people in the communities we serve.”**

Over 300 Heritage Valley providers -- including all of its contracted primary care physicians -- are now using electronic health records. With the \$333,000 in federal funding Altmire secured for it, Heritage Valley will be able to purchase additional equipment that will provide 50 physicians' offices and hospital satellite facilities with access to electronic health records and e-prescribing technology.

This year, Congress is taking steps to expand the use of electronic health records nationwide. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act -- which became law on February 17, 2009 -- provides financial incentives to encourage physicians and hospitals to use electronic health

records. Various health care reform proposals that are currently being debated in Congress also incentivize the use of electronic health records and other health IT measures as a way to improve patient care and lower costs.