

Answers to Your CARE Bill Questions!

WHO:

Who does this bill affect in New Mexico? We're fortunate in New Mexico and have set precedence for other states to follow. We have licensure law for Radiographers, Nuclear Medicine Technologists, Radiation Therapists, Fusion Imaging Technologists, Radiologist Assistants, and Limited X-ray Machine Operators (LXMO's) with regulations pending for MR and Sonography. There are, however, several states that have no licensure law for any imaging modality or have set the standards lower than federally recommended. The CARE bill will raise the requirement for all individuals who perform any medical imaging and radiation therapy procedures, so if you have family or travel in other parts of the nation you can be assured they have the same standards those of us in New Mexico uphold. They will be required to obtain certification by the ARRT or other approved credentialing body to practice or continue to practice in New Mexico. You can read the [proposed standards](#) on the ASRT website.

Who opposes and supports this bill? There is no organized opposition to the CARE bill and [more than 25 healthcare organizations](#) have been working for several years towards seeing it enacted. Recently equipment manufacturers, physician groups and patient advocacy groups have spoken out about the need for qualified personnel. There have been briefings on Capitol Hill about radiation therapy safety and many legislators are speaking out about the need for standards.

Who should I contact to make a difference? It is very important to let your legislators know what matters to you - contact your representative and senators and let them know that passage of the CARE bill is the first step in ensuring a patient receives safe medical imaging and radiation therapy treatment. Representative Ben Lujan and Representative Martin Heinrich have agreed to cosponsor the CARE bill so please extend our appreciation when you contact them. We still need to educate Representative Pearce and attain his cosponsorship as well as Senator Tom Udall and Senator Jeff Bingaman. You can find contact information for their offices at:

Senator Jeff Bingaman	http://asrt.capwiz.com/bio/id/397
Senator Tom Udall	http://asrt.capwiz.com/bio/id/400
Representative Ben Lujan	http://asrt.capwiz.com/bio/id/62459
Representative Martin Heinrich	http://asrt.capwiz.com/bio/id/61668
Representative Steve Pearce	http://asrt.capwiz.com/bio/id/6612

Tell your elected officials a personal story of why this is important to you. And don't forget to spread the word to your colleagues, friends and family — this is an issue that everyone could and should get involved in.

WHY:

Why does New Mexico need the CARE bill? In 2010 New Mexico bill, SB 336 was introduced to our state legislature and would have exempted certified registered nurse anesthetists, certified nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists and certified nurse midwives from the New Mexico Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Health and Safety Act, allowing them to perform ANY diagnostic medical sonography procedures as well as any other medical imaging/radiation therapy procedures. This bill was voted down in the state legislature; but, New Mexico RT's need to protect our patients and get the word out about the CARE bill. The CARE bill will require anyone performing medical imaging or radiation therapy be educated and certified.

As mentioned, there are still several states that do not have any licensure or regulation of imaging personnel. It is up to us to continue the precedence and advocate for all patients regardless of where they live. Take a look at the [Does Your State Regulate](#) map to see the disparity between states that do not have any or limited regulations:

The CARE bill will:

- Save Money — reducing repeat exams by having certified technologists perform exams would save Medicare millions of dollars a year.
- Improve Safety — having certified personnel will reduce the chances of improperly performed procedures. When administered properly, radiation is an invaluable tool in the diagnosis and treatment of disease; but most radiologic procedures also carry a potential health risk and can be harmful if misadministered.

Why do you need my help? Many voices speaking out about patient safety and the vital role radiologic professionals play in ensuring patient safety is essential — we are often the first step in caring for patients, and play an invaluable part in the correct diagnosis of a patient. It is up to us, as registered professionals, to advocate for our patients, elevate the importance of our profession and set the example for others to follow.

While it's important for organizations within the industry to stand behind the CARE bill, constituent involvement is what your legislators really want. They want to know what is important to their voters.

WHAT:

What will it cost? The cost of a registry exam and a NM state license. The radiologic technologist licensure board in each state determines what the state registration fees are. A New Mexico license costs \$110 per biennium. A technologist will also need to pass an exam in the modality they are working within such as MRI, CT, etc.

What are the benefits? Patient safety is in the forefront for the reason behind the push for the CARE bill to be enacted. It is up to us, as caregivers, to do what we can to ensure patients are safe. And utilizing registered technologists who have been proven to meet education and certification standards is the first step.

What will happen to the people that don't meet the requirement of the CARE bill? In order for a facility to be reimbursed by the Medicare system they must show proof that they have hired registered personnel; therefore, personnel who perform medical imaging and plan radiation therapy procedures will need to pass a certification exam. There is a phase in period (grandfathering) included in the CARE bill for non-certified personnel.

What changes will I have to make? You, as a registered technologist, won't have to make any or very few changes...because you have already been taking the steps needed to prove you are a qualified professional. However, you should see an overall elevation of the status of our profession and more individuals will have to step up to the plate and prove, through certification, that they have the same commitment to quality care.

What happens when the bill passes? The U.S. Health and Humans Services Department will be responsible for setting the regulations when the CARE bill is enacted. The regulations are the rules that will enforce the provisions of the CARE bill. While HHS has full responsibility for the regulations they will seek input from organizations that are recognized experts in the field, such as the ASRT. It will take approximately three years for non-licensed technologists to be required to comply with the new law once it is enacted.

WHEN:

When do you think the CARE bill will pass? We think it's possible the CARE bill could pass before the end of this year — it has been introduced by Rep. Ed Whitfield from Kentucky and currently has 43 cosponsors, many of which are on the House Energy & Commerce Committee which has jurisdiction over the CARE bill. That's why it is important for you to act now. Congress needs to know you stand behind their decision to pass H.R. 2104, the CARE bill. Once the CARE bill gets moved on in the House of Representatives, the Senate is committed to introducing it and moving on it too. So please write your representative today!