

October 13, 1998

Hon. Erskine Bowles
Chief of Staff

White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Bowles:

On behalf of the over 100,000 physicians who are members of the American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine (ACP-ASIM), I urge the White House to strongly oppose a last-minute effort by supporters of the Lethal Drug Abuse Prevention Act, S. 2151/H.R. 4006, to get a modified version of this controversial and harmful legislation included in the omnibus appropriations bill.

Senator Nickles has prepared a substitute to S. 2151 that he hopes to include in the appropriations bill. The substitute, which would expand the authority of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to prosecute physicians who prescribe narcotics for pain relief, would create even more problems than the original bill. The substitute will expose physicians, patients and their families to intrusive investigations by the DEA of the circumstances under which physicians prescribe narcotics to treat pain. The threat of a DEA investigation *will* have an adverse impact on pain management. It *will* expose patients to unnecessary pain and suffering. It *will* expose patients—and their families—to questions by government investigators about matters that should remain private. The original version of S. 2151 was bad enough; the Nickles substitute is worse because it fails to include any statutory language authorizing use of narcotics to treat pain.

ACP-ASIM has urged Congress to put aside this legislation and invite all of those who are concerned about care of the dying to work on developing legislative recommendations, for consideration next year, that will improve care of dying patients.

It is essential that the White House stand with patients and their care-givers in objecting to misuse of the appropriations process to get the Nickles substitute enacted law.

I will be calling you later today to discuss this further with you.

Sincerely,

Robert B. Copeland, MD, MACP
Chairman of the Board

COPY: Chris Jennings
Deputy Assistant to the President for Health Policy