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The Honorable Jim McDermott
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman McDermott:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to applaud your efforts in introducing the *Medical Neutrality Protection Act of 2013* (H.R. 2033) which would establish the protection of medical neutrality as “a policy priority of the United States.” ACP is the nation’s largest physician specialty society and the second largest physician membership organization in the United States. ACP members include 137,000 internal medicine physicians, related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians (internists) are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

Physicians and other health care personnel are called upon to treat the sick and injured in situations of conflict and civil unrest, often at great risk to their own lives and safety. The principle of medical neutrality, rooted in professional medical ethics as well as in international law and human rights conventions, serves to protect medical personnel as they treat those in need of care regardless of ethnic, political or other affiliation.

ACP has spoken out in support of the principle of medical neutrality, most recently calling on the government of Bahrain to cease the arrest and detainment of medical personnel who are adhering to their ethical obligations in administering medical care, the blockade and/or lock down of health care facilities, the obstruction of and attack on medical transports, and the physical and/or psychological abuse of patients. ACP has urged the government of Bahrain to hold all those responsible for violations of medical neutrality accountable under the law.

ACP welcomes and supports H.R. 2033’s recognition of medical neutrality as an issue of human rights law and international convention and as essential for the protection of physicians as they carry out their ethical and professional responsibilities to treat those in need of medical care in times of armed conflict. We thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Very truly yours,

Molly Cooke, MD, FACP