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**CALIFORNIA IMPROVES THE ENVIRONMENT FOR TREATING PAIN  
RECEIVES A FULL GRADE HIGHER ON PAIN REPORT CARD**

Sacramento – California has made regulatory and legal changes that have improved the environment for treating pain, announced the Northern California Pain Initiative (NCPI) and the Southern California Cancer Pain Initiative (SCCPI). In a new report card produced by the Pain & Policy Studies Group (PPSG) evaluating state pain policy, California received a B grade. This is a full grade improvement from the 2006 report card, in which California received a C.

Chronic pain is a problem that faces one in four Americans. It is the number one reason people seek medical care. Yet many people in pain do not receive the appropriate treatment. Many barriers exist that contribute to this situation but the report card focuses specifically on the policy landscape. It is based on a central principal of balance, which holds that policies should 1) ensure prescription pain medications are available to patients who need them and 2) keep those medications away from those who intend to misuse them. It also emphasizes consistency with modern medical standards for pain treatment.

“This is wonderful recognition of the effort those in the pain community have put into making improvements in pain law and policy in the last couple years. We are taking a moment to enjoy our success, yet our job is not done. We will continue to work toward an A on the report card,” said Beverly Nicholson, Chair person of the Northern California Pain Initiative

Kathe Kelly, Director of the Southern California Cancer Pain Initiative stated, “We need the momentum around improving pain treatment to continue and will partner with NCPI to keep it going. In the meantime, we’ll be educating providers about recent changes so they can respond to those in pain with the best standard of care possible.”

NCPI credits changes made by AB 2198, legislation authored by Assembly Member Guy Houston and sponsored by the Medical Board of California in 2006, for the improved report card grade. The bill clearly, and properly, defined who an addict is and is not; clarified that even an addict may receive controlled substances, as indicated, for other medical conditions; recognized the concept of pseudoaddiction—that some patients who appear to be drug-seekers and doctor shoppers are actually victims of under treatment of pain. It also simplified California’s Intractable Pain Treatment Act so that it applies to all pain states, not just intractable pain.

NCPI, a project of the American Cancer Society, California Division, is dedicated to promoting the right of all people to control their pain to maximize their quality of life. More information can be found here: <http://www.norcalpain.net>

SCCPI is a nonprofit voluntary organization in Southern California of over 2500 multidisciplinary healthcare professionals who advocate for regulatory fairness and provide education and resources on pain management to promote optimum pain relief for all in pain. More information can be found here: <http://sccpi.coh.org>

PPSG is a University-based academic research, education, and communications program located in the Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Wisconsin Medical School. It is the designated World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Center for Policy and Communications in Cancer Care. More information can be found here: <http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu>

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