July 3rd, 2013

Cynthia LaBonde
Executive Director
Wyoming Board of Nursing
130 Hobbs Avenue
Suite B
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Dear Ms. LaBonde:

On behalf of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), I am writing to urge the Wyoming Board of Nursing to support the retention of the federal physician supervision requirement that is currently followed in a majority of states. A decision to remove the supervision requirement would not be in the best interest of the residents and patients of Wyoming as it would jeopardize patient safety.

The ACS has a strong history of addressing matters relating to patient care and safety, and we are concerned that an opt out would allow Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) to practice medicine without the oversight and education requirements imposed on medical doctors. Practicing outside of their scope of practice and without proper supervision by a medical doctor may open up Wyoming citizens to unsafe environments and procedures.

Since 1966, Medicare/Medicaid law has required supervision of nurse anesthetists by a physician (anesthesiologist or operating surgeon). While we respect the role nurse anesthetists fulfill in the delivery of health care, their level of education, training and experience does not justify independent practice. A decision to opt out, thereby removing physicians from providing medical expertise and supervision during the administration of anesthesia would place patients at a great risk. Wyoming patients do not deserve a lower standard of care that has effectively worked for more than 40 years. Opting out would deprive the patients of Wyoming from receiving the high quality of care that is offered to millions of citizens nationally.
Physicians are uniquely qualified, by extensive education and training to provide medical diagnosis, care, and treatment of the patient. Because of their medical knowledge, they are best able to recognize, intervene and manage the medical complications that exist before, during and after surgery. While anesthesia has become safer, plenty of risks remain. Those risks necessitate retaining physician supervision of nurse anesthetists.

In the interest of patient safety, the American College of Surgeons believes that opting out of physician supervision in Wyoming places patients in jeopardy. As such, the ACS urges the nursing board to protect patient safety for Wyoming citizens and support the maintenance of the current supervision requirement for nurse anesthetists.

Sincerely,

David B. Hoyt, MD, FACS
Executive Director