

91 Physician Organizations Sign Statement Naming Congress in “Mismanagement of the Medicare Program” and Imploring it to “Honor its Obligation”

UPDATE: On June 25, 2010, President Obama signed into law the “Preservation of Access to Care for Medicare Beneficiaries and Pension Relief Act of 2010 (H.R. 3962)” which includes a delay in the 21+% Medicare fee cut until November 30, 2010. CMS will have the MACs start processing new claims with dates of service of June 1, 2010 and later at the 2009 fee schedule plus a 2.2% increase. The MACs will also have to reprocess the claims already paid for dates of service June 1, 2010 and later that were processed with 2010 fee schedule and that big fat cut.

Note: On June 16, 2010 the Senate failed to pass a proposal that would increase the Medicare reimbursement for physicians by 2.2% for the balance of calendar year 2010 and by 1% for calendar year 2011. Senate leadership is now working on a plan to extend the freeze until year-end. The following statement was released by the state medical societies of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as 41 specialty physician organizations.



Image via Wikipedia

Statement of the State and Specialty Medical Societies on the Medicare Physician Payment Crisis

Failure by Congress to fulfill its responsibilities is undermining patient care in America. Three times this year, Congress has missed a deadline for dealing with Medicare's sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula, raising the specter of a 21 percent payment cut for physician services. The disruption and uncertainty for patients and physicians has made Medicare an unreliable program.

If Congress does not act this week, Medicare physician payments will be cut 21 percent. These cuts will also extend to the TRICARE program which serves military families, as well as some Medicaid programs, workers compensation programs and private insurance plans. The ripple effect of the 21 percent Medicare cut will be devastating to physician practices.

Congressional mismanagement of the Medicare program will force more physicians to stop accepting new Medicare and TRICARE patients; lay-off staff; and defer investment in new medical equipment, health information technology, and other innovations that improve patient care.

Patients and physicians should not become collateral damage in a Congressional stalemate on budgetary matters. We expect our elected officials to resolve the budget issues without punishing physicians, seniors and military families.

Past actions by Congress created the current budgetary challenge. Further, since 2003, Congress has compounded this problem by employing budget gimmicks that defer immediate cuts by stipulating deeper cuts in future years.

Democrats and Republicans agree that the flawed Medicare formula that is responsible for pending cuts should be repealed. The annual SGR battle diverts attention from more productive delivery and payment reform initiatives. We must move to a payment system that fosters innovation and rewards

physician efforts to lower the rate of growth in Medicare spending across the existing silos in the program.

Medicare must adequately cover the cost of care and close an existing 20 percent gap as measured by the government's own conservative measure of annual increases in medical practice costs.

We must also allow seniors who wish to contract directly for their care with a physician of their choice to do so without foregoing the Medicare benefits for which they paid during their working years. Medicare benefits were earned by and belong to Medicare beneficiaries. They must be allowed to assign these benefits as they see fit.

Playing brinksmanship with the health care of seniors and military families is inexcusable and represents a dereliction of duty. We urge Congress to honor its obligation to provide access to quality care to America's seniors and military families by taking action to fix the Medicare physician formula problem now!

- American Academy of Dermatology
- American Academy of Facial Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery
- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Hospice & Palliative Medicine
- American Academy of Neurology
- American Academy of Ophthalmology
- American Academy of Pain Medicine
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
- American Academy of Sleep Medicine
- American Association for Hand Surgery
- American Association of Clinical Endocrinologist
- American Association of Clinical Urologist
- American Association of Neurological Surgeons
- American Association of Neuromuscular & Electrodiagnostic Medicine

American Association of Public Health Physicians
American College of Cardiology
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists
American College of Occupational & Environmental Medicine
American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
American Gastroenterological Association
American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine
American Medical Association
American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society for Surgery of the Hand
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Cataract & Refractive Surgery
American Society of Cytopathology
American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic & Reconstructive
Surgery
College of American Pathologists
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Heart Rhythm Society
North American Spine Society
Renal Physicians Association
Society of American Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons
Society of Nuclear Medicine

Medical Association of the State of Alabama
Alaska State Medical Association
Arizona Medical Association
Arkansas Medical Society
California Medical Association
Colorado Medical Society
Connecticut State Medical Society
Medical Society of Delaware
Medical Society of the District of Columbia

Florida Medical Association, Inc.
Medical Association of Georgia
Hawaii Medical Association
Idaho Medical Association
Illinois State Medical Society
Indiana State Medical Association
Iowa Medical Society
Kansas Medical Society
Kentucky Medical Association
Louisiana State Medical Society
Maine Medical Association
MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society
Massachusetts Medical Society
Michigan State Medical Society
Minnesota Medical Association
Mississippi State Medical Association
Missouri State Medical Association
Montana Medical Association
Nebraska Medical Association
Nevada State Medical Association
New Hampshire Medical Society
Medical Society of New Jersey
New Mexico Medical Society
Medical Society of the State of New York
North Carolina Medical Society
North Dakota Medical Association
Ohio State Medical Association
Oklahoma State Medical Association
Oregon Medical Association
Pennsylvania Medical Society
Rhode Island Medical Society
South Carolina Medical Association
South Dakota State Medical Association
Tennessee Medical Association
Texas Medical Association
Utah Medical Association
Vermont Medical Society

Medical Society of Virginia
Washington State Medical Association
West Virginia State Medical Association
Wisconsin Medical Society
Wyoming Medical Society

