



AMA, AARP and MOAA Call for Passage of House Medicare Reform Bill, Vote Expected this Week on H.R. 3961

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Washington, D.C. – Today, leading advocates for seniors, military families and physicians joined together to call for passage of legislation in the House that will preserve access to care for seniors, baby boomers and military families through repeal of the broken Medicare physician payment formula. A vote on H.R. 3961, the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act of 2009, is expected this week, and the American Medical Association (AMA), AARP and the Military Officers of America (MOAA) call on members of Congress to honor the federal government's obligations to seniors and military families and pass the bill.

"Without repeal of the broken payment formula, the security and stability of Medicare is at risk for seniors who rely on the program now and baby boomers who will enter it in two years," said AMA Immediate-Past President Nancy Nielsen, M.D. "Physicians want to care for seniors and military family patients, but steep payment cuts of 21 percent next year, with more in years to come, will force them to limit the Medicare and TRICARE patients they can treat."

"This is the time of year when physicians have to decide if they will participate in Medicare through the physician open enrollment process," said Dr. Nielsen. "Swift passage of H.R. 3961 will be a vote of confidence for America's physicians as they decide if they can participate in Medicare next year and care for seniors and military families."

"A recent poll by the AARP found that 76 percent of Americans 50 and older believe that ensuring that people could see the doctor of their choice is a convincing reason to support health care reform," said AARP President Jennie Chin Hansen. "Baby boomers are caring for parents who rely on Medicare now, and the first wave of boomers will reach age 65 in two years. Let's do away with the current payment formula so seniors can have the piece of mind that comes with knowing they can see the doctor of their choice and get the care they need."

"Access to health care already is the single biggest problem for military beneficiaries of all ages," said Colonel Steve Strobridge, USAF-Ret., Director of Government Relations, MOAA. "The 21 percent cut to Medicare and

TRICARE payments called for under current law would make that problem exponentially worse by causing large numbers of doctors to stop seeing elderly and military patients. The last thing troops in combat should have to worry about is whether their sick spouse or child can find a doctor to treat them.”

“Congress has taken short-term action in the past, but we can no longer support putting a band-aid on the festering wound that is Medicare’s physician payment formula,” said Dr. Nielsen. “The old band-aid approach is fiscally irresponsible, since it has only served to make future cuts steeper and increase the costs of true payment reform. It is essential that Congress fix the formula once and for all so we can meet the goals of comprehensive health reform that improve the system for patients and those who care for them. As Congress prepares to make new coverage commitments to the American people, they must honor the obligations already made to seniors and military families.”

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