

November 13, 2006

The Honorable Bill Frist, M.D.
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Dr. Frist:

On behalf of the undersigned national and state medical societies, we urge you to pass legislation during the lame-duck session of Congress to halt a scheduled across-the-board cut in Medicare payments to physicians and provide physicians with a positive payment update for 2007. If Congress does not act, the sustainable growth rate (SGR) will cut Medicare payments to all physicians by 5 percent on January 1, 2007. On numerous occasions, Members of Congress have indicated that this pending cut would be addressed prior to the end of the 109th Congress. We stand ready to work with you to fulfill those commitments.

In addition to the SGR cuts, many physicians will see cuts from other Medicare changes as well. In fact, nearly half are facing combined cuts of 6 to 20 percent due to the following policies: expiring geographic adjustments, imaging cuts mandated by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, budget neutrality adjustments associated with the five-year review, and changes in the practice expense methodology. These policies will compound the effect of SGR cuts for thousands of physicians and make it even more imperative that Congress act now to stop the SGR cut before it destabilizes the Medicare program and erodes access to care for America's seniors.

According to an American Medical Association survey, if payments are cut as projected in 2007, 45 percent of physicians will either decrease or stop accepting new Medicare patients in 2007, and 50 percent of physicians plan to defer the purchase of information technology. Additionally, 43 percent of physicians will decrease the number of new TRICARE patients they accept, as TRICARE ties its physician payment rates to Medicare.

Stopping the SGR cut is the action that Congress should take to improve the outlook for all Medicare physicians and their senior patients. **Over 265 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and over 80 members of the United States Senate have signed letters this year urging that physicians be provided with a positive payment update in 2007.**

We strongly urge Congress to take immediate action to fulfill the commitment it has made to America's seniors to ensure their continued access to high quality health care.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Facial, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Home Care Physicians
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine

American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy
American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Academy of Sleep Medicine
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American Association for Thoracic Surgery
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
American Association of Clinical Urologists
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Cardiology
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Internists
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Physicians
American College of Preventive Medicine
American College of Radiology Association
American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
American Gastroenterological Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Medical Association
American Medical Directors Association
American Medical Group Association
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Rhinologic Society
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Society of Plastic Surgeons

American Thoracic Society
American Urological Association
A O North America
Association of American Medical Colleges
Child Neurology Society
College of American Pathologists
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Heart Rhythm Society
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Medical Group Management Association
National Medical Association
North American Spine Society
Puerto Rico College of Physicians & Surgeons, Radiology, Radiotherapy and Nuclear Medicine Chapters
Radiological Society of Puerto Rico
Renal Physicians Association
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Critical Care Medicine
Society of Gynecologic Oncologists
Society of Hospital Medicine
Society of Interventional Radiology
Society of Nuclear Medicine
Society of Pediatric Nephrology
Society of Thoracic Surgeons
The Endocrine Society

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
Idaho Medical Association
Illinois State Medical Society
Indiana State Medical Association
Iowa Medical Society
Kansas Medical Society
Kentucky Medical Association
Louisiana State Medical Society
Massachusetts Medical Society
MedChi, the Maryland State 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
New Mexico Medical Society
Medical Society of New Jersey
Medical Society of the State of New York
North Carolina Medical Society
North Dakota Medical Association
Ohio 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

cc: United States Senate