

## ATTENTION PHYSICIANS AND PATIENTS!

### Congress must act now to repeal Medicare's Sustainable Growth Rate formula!

We need your help in reaching out to Congress. Effective **3/1/2010**, a 21% pay cut to the nation's physicians went into effect. This will affect all Senior's and TRICARE (military) beneficiaries access to health care.

For the past year, President Obama and Congress have worked to pass a health care bill. In the midst of all the rhetoric, Medicare — the largest health program run by the government — is imploding. The government simply cannot run a health care program without physicians to care for the patients Medicare covers.

In 1997, Congress came up with a formula, the "Sustainable Growth Rate," that set the amount Medicare would reimburse doctors for treating its patients. The formula was constructed to track with both health-care costs and the overall economy. The growth of the first started outstripping the second in 2001, and as a result, the formula began to call for a cut in Medicare payments to doctors. When it came time to make that cut, nobody wanted to go through with it. The reason was obvious. If doctors suddenly had to absorb a substantial part of the cost of treating Medicare patients, they might drop those patients.

Every year since 2001, when the cut has come due, Congress has decided it needs more time to decide how it feels about the issue. Most recently, the cut was supposed to go into effect Jan. 1; Congress bought itself two more months. **Then 3/1/2010 came and there was no remedy!** Medicare has asked physicians to **NOT** submit bills for 14 days. **WE ONLY HAVE 14 DAYS TO FIX THIS.**

Physicians simply can no longer afford to subsidize Medicare. They make less today treating a Medicare patient than they did in 2001. Factoring in inflation and the increasing cost of running a practice, the recent Medicare cut is **not 21.2 percent but a cumulative 83 percent**. How can Congress expect doctors to stay in the Medicare program?

Medicare payments currently cover only 51 percent of physicians' direct practice costs, and the gap between payment updates and the cost of caring for patients keeps growing.

There are two ways you can help. First you can call your elected officials via the **AMA's grassroots hotline at (800) 833-6354**. **Second, you can copy the sample letter below and paste it directly onto your Senator's website via the links below. Act now to avoid this healthcare catastrophe!**

Kit Bond MO senator: 314.725.4484 Claire McCaskill MO senator: 314.367.1364

Below is a sample letter you may use:

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

I am very concerned about the Sustainable Growth Rate for reimbursing Medicare and TRICARE physicians. These programs are vital to the health and well-being of Americans who have served our nation so long and so well.

Congress had more than a year to repeal the Medicare payment formula and ensure the security and stability of the program, but instead, it has abandoned patients who rely on Medicare and TRICARE for their health care. Parliamentary procedures offer no excuse for the harm being caused to these programs. Stop playing games with patients and the physicians; repeal the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula once and for all.

Thank you for your consideration,

Respectfully yours,

Below are links to the Senators in Missouri:

For Claire McCaskill, type in the following internet address:

<http://mccaskill.senate.gov/?p=contact>

For Kit Bond, type in the following internet address:

<http://bond.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=contactus.contactform>