

MEDICARE FEE CUTS

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any program with a similar fee setting system."

Initial Democratic proposals to postpone the scheduled physician fee cuts were rolled into the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) legislation. This initiative is still stalled, and Democrats have now dropped the fee cut provision in an effort to gain Republican backing for the child care package. Senate Finance Committee Chair Max Baucus (D-MT) has now proposed a \$25 to \$30 billion Medicare package that would, among other things, suspend the scheduled physician pay cuts for the next two years. This move would partially be funded through reductions in payments for Medicare Advantage Plans, a potential savings of \$54 billion.

Massive controversy continues to surround the Medicare Advantage plans, which have a 19 percent additional cost per beneficiary price tag, compared to the standard Part B fee-for-service option,

through which most Medicare beneficiaries are covered. According to House Ways Subcommittee on Health Chairman Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA), "Eighty-two percent of Medicare beneficiaries receive their care through traditional fee-for-service providers, but make up only 71 percent of benefit costs."

In addition to the pending fee cuts, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced that next year's Medicare Part B premium will go up 3.1%. That's the smallest percentage increase in seven years.

Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), Ranking Minority Member on the Senate Finance Committee has indicated that Republicans would support a one year fee cut postponement, an indication that both parties in Congress recognize that some action is needed. ICA strongly supports the two-year postponement because it believes that at least that much time will be needed to find a long-term solution to the currently flawed Medicare SRG-based physician payment formula.

ICA strongly urges all in the chiropractic profession, Medicare patients and

their families to support Senator Baucus's two-year postponement, and to immediately contact their United States Senators and urge them to support this important step.

"A simple, direct statement of support for Senator Baucus's plan to postpone the scheduled 2008 and 2009 doctor fee cuts is what is needed," said ICA Legislative Committee Co-Chair Dr. Michael McLean. "Tell your Senators that

**ICA urges all DCs,
their Medicare patients
and their families to
support Sen. Baucus's
(D-MT) initiative of a
2-year postponement
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and ask them to
support this proposal.**

a cut in fees will make it even harder for Medicare beneficiaries to obtain timely, quality care. They need to act NOW to stop the scheduled fee cuts!"

To find your United States Senators, simply go to the site below and enter your state. Each state, regardless of size has two Senators. Their office contact information can be obtained by clicking on the links that appear from your state information.

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

ICA's Legislative Team has been in direct contact with both Democratic and Republican representatives of the Senate Finance Committee, and while serious compromise efforts are underway on the fee cut postponement issue, both sides agree that this issue will come down to the wire, and will likely be one of the last votes taken by the Congress before they adjourn for the year. ICA is aggressively following this issue and will provide the chiropractic profession with regular updates. In the meantime, all DCs should respond to the immediate call to action in support of Senator Baucus's two-year postponement initiative.

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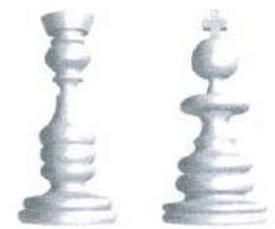
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