

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 109<sup>th</sup> 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