



HEALTH SYSTEM REFORM BULLETIN

Jan. 22, 2010

Here's your regular update on efforts by the American Medical Association (AMA) to work with lawmakers in reforming the nation's health care system in a way that provides quality, affordable health care for all.

Congress, White House reassessing health system reform goals and strategy

In the wake of the Jan. 19 special election in Massachusetts, which will send new Republican Senator-elect Scott Brown to Washington, D.C., negotiations to reconcile differences between the health system reform bills passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate have been put on hold. The loss of the Senate's 60-seat Democratic majority and firm Republican opposition to both bills means that Congressional leaders must reassess both their goals and strategy to successfully enact health system reforms.

Congressional leaders and President Obama publicly expressed the view that a new compromise bill should not be rushed through before Senator-elect Brown is seated, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi stated yesterday that she did not believe the Senate bill would pass the House without significant changes. Health system reform could be passed as part of a budget reconciliation bill that could pass the Senate with a simple majority of 51 votes, but procedural rules would prevent such a legislative vehicle from including important policy changes that do not directly affect the federal budget, such as insurance market reforms to eliminate pre-existing condition exclusions. Other options being considered—each of which presents its own challenges—include drafting a new bill with more bipartisan input or passing several smaller bills that address various aspects of reform.

The AMA believes it will be several more days at least before decisions are made about next steps that will be taken toward further action on health system reform.

AMA joins forces with AARP and MOAA to urge Senate action on Medicare pay cuts

On Jan. 21, the AMA joined with the AARP and Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) in a five-city satellite press conference to call on Congress to permanently repeal



KEY DATES

Jan. 27:

President Obama's State of the Union Address

IMPORTANT LINKS

[Joint AMA/AARP letter to Majority Leader Reid and Speaker Pelosi urging repeal of the SGR](#) (PDF)

[AMA letter to Congress regarding various issues in reform negotiations](#) (PDF)

[AMA letter to Congress regarding IPAB provision in H.R. 3590](#) (PDF)

[AMA letter to Congress urging permanent repeal of SGR formula](#) (PDF)

[Summary comparison of H.R. 3590 to H.R. 3962 and AMA policy](#) (PDF)

[AMA Legislative Action Center](#)

[AMA Vision for Health System Reform](#)

[AMA Physicians' Grassroots Network and Patients' Action Network](#)

[Health Care for All Americans](#)

the current Medicare physician payment formula, and replace it with one that reflects the cost of providing care to Medicare and TRICARE patients. Leaders representing the AMA, AARP and MOAA spoke from Washington, D.C.; Madison, Wisc.; Norfolk, Va.; Bismarck, N.D.; and Portland, Maine, urging the Senate to permanently fix the Medicare physician payment problem before seniors, military families and baby boomers face a limited choice of physicians and limited access to care.

Following the press event, the AMA and AARP sent a [joint letter](#) (PDF) to Senate and House leadership underscoring the urgency of repealing the current sustainable growth rate formula to avert a 21 percent physician payment cut scheduled to take effect March 1. The event coincides with a joint AMA/AARP [television ad campaign](#) that is also urging action on this issue. The program as well as photos from the event can be viewed on the AMA's [health system reform Web site](#). The event attracted local and national media, resulting in considerable coverage on this issue.



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Bismarck, N.D.



WKOW-TV
Madison, Wisc.



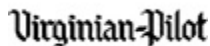
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