



Wisconsin Medical Society

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For Immediate Release

Contact:

Mark Grapentine, JD, 608.442.3768
markg@wismed.org

Wisconsin physicians call on Congress to override Medicare veto

Madison (July 15, 2008)— The Wisconsin Medical Society today called on the state’s Congressional Delegation to override President Bush’s veto of H.R. 6331, the “Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008.” The bill ensures access to care for Wisconsin Medicare patients, eliminating a 10.6 percent physician Medicare reimbursement cut that took effect on July 1, as well as restoring a credit for physicians who see patients in rural areas of Wisconsin. The Society’s letter, responding to today’s veto, is signed by President Steven Bergin, MD, Board Chair George Lange, MD, and Society EVP/CEO Susan Turney, MD.

“Uncorrected, this cut would be a disaster for Medicare patients as 60 percent of physicians say it will force them to limit the number of new Medicare patients they can treat,” the letter says, citing a recent American Medical Association survey of the nation’s physicians. “We are proud that more than 80 percent of all Wisconsin physicians care for Medicare patients. However, this impressive percentage has fallen in recent years as Medicare payments lag behind increases in practice costs.”

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The letter also points out that H.R. 6331 is only a short-term fix for a much larger problem: Medicare physician funding is tied to a flawed federal formula—the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR)—which penalizes physicians in states like Wisconsin who provide high-quality care more efficiently than in other states.

H.R. 6331 has passed both houses of Congress with “veto-proof” margins: 69-30 in the Senate last Wednesday and 355-59 in the House on June 24. Eight of Wisconsin’s 10 members of Congress voted for the bill: Senators Kohl and Feingold, and Representatives Baldwin, Kind, Moore, Petri, Obey and Kagen.

The Society has also sent out an action alert to its membership, asking physicians across the state to call their members of Congress about the need for an override vote.

With over 12,000 members dedicated to the best interests of their patients, the Wisconsin Medical Society is the largest association of medical doctors in the state and a trusted source for health policy leadership since 1841. Your Doctor. Your Health.

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