



NEWS FROM THE AMA
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 5, 2009

AMA SUPPORTS HOUSE BILLS TO MAKE HEALTH REFORM A REALITY
H.R. 3962 and H.R. 3961 would go a long way toward making the health system better for patients and physicians

HOUSTON – The American Medical Association (AMA) today announced support for concurrent passage of H.R. 3962 and H.R. 3961, U.S. House of Representatives health system reform bills.

“The time to make health system reform a reality is now,” said J. James Rohack, AMA president. “These two bills were introduced together, and they need to be passed together. Both are essential to achieving meaningful health system reform this year.”

“On balance, H.R. 3962, The Affordable Health Care for America Act, is consistent with our principles of pluralism, freedom of choice, freedom of physician practice and universal access. It will significantly expand health insurance coverage to Americans to empower patient and physician decision making; institute meaningful insurance market reforms; make substantial investments in quality; institute prevention and wellness initiatives; provide incentives to states that adopt certificate of merit and/or early offer liability reforms, and reduce administrative burdens.”

“H.R. 3962 is not the perfect bill, and we will continue to advocate for changes, but it goes a long way toward expanding access to high-quality affordable health coverage for all Americans, and it would make the system better for patients and physicians,” Dr. Rohack said. “This is not the last step but the next step toward health system reform. We will remain actively engaged with patients, physicians, Congress and the administration to ensure that the final bill results in marked improvements to our health system.”

AMA also called on Congress to pass the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act of 2009 (H.R. 3961) to permanently repeal the broken physician payment formula and preserve access to care for seniors, baby boomers and military families.

“Ensuring the security and stability of Medicare must serve as the foundation for any serious health system reform this year,” Dr. Rohack said. “In less than 60 days, Medicare physician payments are scheduled to be cut by 21 percent, with more cuts in years to come. According to a recent AARP poll, nearly 90 percent of people age 50 and older are concerned that the current Medicare physician payment formula threatens their access to care.”

“While short-term patches have temporarily averted widespread access problems, they have also grown the size of the problem – and the cost of reform,” Dr. Rohack said. “The AMA is committed to fixing the Medicare payment problem once and for all -- for seniors, baby boomers and the physicians who care for them.”

“As Congress considers new coverage commitments to the American people through health reform, it must ensure that commitments already made are fulfilled,” Dr. Rohack said. “Congress created the Medicare physician payment system, and Congress needs to fix this problem once and for all to fulfill its obligation to seniors, baby boomers and military families. A permanent solution to the flawed Medicare physician payment formula is an essential element of comprehensive reform and is needed to fulfill Congress’ existing obligations to current and future Medicare and TRICARE patients.”

“Compromise is a necessity in the legislative process, but we, as physicians, will never compromise our principles or the public trust. That is why we are supporting H.R. 3962 and H.R. 3961 – two bills that passed together will go a long way toward making health system reform a reality in 2009,” Dr. Rohack said.

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Note: An AMA letter to Speaker Pelosi was sent today and is available at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/399/hsr-ama-pelosi-letter.pdf>

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