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Medical  
Association  
of Georgia

*Building a Better State of Health Since 1849*

## ***Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 becomes law***

On July 15, the U.S. Congress voted overwhelmingly to override President Bush's veto of the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (H.R. 6331), allowing the bill to become law.

H.R. 6331 retroactively replaces the 10.6 percent payment cut that went into effect on July 1 with a 0.5 percent update extension through the end of 2008. It also provides an additional 1.1 percent update for 2009.

The 18-month reprieve will allow Congress time to work with physicians on developing a long-term solution to a flawed payment system.

“On behalf of physicians and patients across Georgia, I’d like to express my genuine thanks to those congressional leaders who demonstrated real leadership in supporting this critical legislation,” said Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) President Jack M. Chapman Jr., M.D. “This will help provide our patients with timely access to the health care and the peace of mind that they deserve.”

He added that, “I would also like to thank those physicians who supported MAG’s recent advocacy efforts. Based on the feedback that I received from a number of key stakeholders, our grassroots efforts in Georgia made a big difference in the outcome. I’d also like to recognize the American Medical Association for orchestrating an excellent nationwide grassroots campaign.”

Dr. Chapman said that he was pleased to find out that the bill received widespread support from Georgia’s congressional delegation, including Senators Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson as well as Representatives Sanford Bishop, Nathan Deal, Phil Gingrey, Hank Johnson, Jack Kingston, Jim Marshall, Tom Price, and David Scott.

The House reached a requisite two-thirds majority to override the president’s veto with a 383-41 vote on the afternoon of July 15, which was followed by the Senate’s pro-H.R. 6331 70-26 vote later that evening.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), physicians, non-physician practitioners and other providers of services paid under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule will begin receiving the 0.5 percent payment update in the second half of July.

CMS said that Medicare contractors are updating their payment system with the new rates. CMS also said that those contractors will continue to process the claims that have been on hold on a first in, first out rolling basis for payment at the 10.6 percent level, and they will begin to automatically reprocess any claims paid at the lower rates as quickly as possible. Additional information on physician pay issues is available at [www.cms.hhs.gov/PhysicianFeeSched](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PhysicianFeeSched).

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