



October 16, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid:

On behalf of the American Medical Association and AARP, we strongly urge you to vote for consideration and passage of S. 1776 – legislation to permanently repeal the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula, avoid looming Medicare physician payment cuts, and to provide Medicare patients with the security and stability they deserve.

Joint polling we recently conducted found that two-thirds of people over 50 years old are either very or somewhat concerned that the current health care system limits their ability to see the doctor of their choice. These fears have been compounded by the annual legislative struggle to avert Medicare physician payment cuts – temporary “band-aids” which have only served to increase the size of future cuts. The continuing threat of steep Medicare payment cuts jeopardizes seniors’ access to care and physicians’ confidence in the government’s commitment to funding a strong and reliable Medicare program.

Physicians face an unprecedented 21.5 percent cut in Medicare payment rates in January 2010, with additional cuts in future years. S. 1776 would repeal the SGR formula and establish a zero update for ten years. Erasing the SGR debt wipes the slate clean and sets the stage for additional Medicare physician payment reforms. We believe repealing the flawed SGR formula is essential to achieving true delivery system reform in the future.

Seven times in the last seven years, Congress has passed legislation to over-ride the SGR formula. In essence, Congress has been operating with an artificial budget baseline for Medicare physician spending which it has repeatedly decided is inappropriate from both policy and service delivery perspectives. It’s time for Congress to adopt a real baseline. Those who are concerned about waiving budget requirements should recognize that the past practice of “temporary band-aids” on the SGR problem has only served to increase both the size of future cuts and the cost of subsequent interventions. That is neither responsible budget policy nor in keeping with our obligations to provide access, choice and quality care to Medicare patients and military families enrolled in the TRICARE program.

As the nation’s largest organizations representing physicians and older Americans, we urge you to vote for cloture, to waive the budget point of order and support final passage of S. 1776.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA  
Executive Vice President  
American Medical Association

A. Barry Rand  
Chief Executive Officer  
AARP



## AARP Disappointed by Senate's Vote to Block Protection of Access to Medicare Doctors

from: [Press Center](#) | October 21, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 2009

Contact

AARP Media Relations, [media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org)

AARP Disappointed by Senate's Vote to Block Protection of Access to Medicare Doctors  
S. 1776 would have preserved access by replacing flawed payment system

WASHINGTON—AARP today criticized the Senate's vote to block the Medicare Physician Fairness Act (S. 1776)—a bill that would have preserved access to doctors for people in Medicare. A statement from AARP Senior Vice President David Sloane follows:

"On behalf of our 40 million members, AARP is deeply disappointed that legislation to preserve seniors' access to their doctors was blocked in the U.S. Senate today, proving once again Washington lawmakers would rather play political games than protect the needs of seniors.

"The Senate's failure to fix the flawed doctor payment system means that payment rates for doctors in Medicare could be cut by 21.5 percent in just a few months. Short-term patches to preserve physician pay make the access problem worse by undermining doctors' confidence in the Medicare program.

"AARP supported this bill because it would have given Medicare patients the certainty they deserve in knowing that access to their doctors would be preserved. Despite today's setback, AARP will keep fighting for a legislative solution that will protect seniors' access to their doctors and ensure they can get the care they need to stay healthy."

For more information on AARP's health care reform effort, please visit  
[http://www.aarp.org/health/articles/health\\_reform\\_get\\_the\\_facts.html](http://www.aarp.org/health/articles/health_reform_get_the_facts.html).

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 35.5 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's 40 million members and Americans 50+; AARP Segunda Juventud, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, [AARP.org](http://www.aarp.org). AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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## **AARP: Congress' Inaction Threatens Older Americans' Access to Doctors**

from: [Press Center](#) | June 18, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 18, 2010

Contact

Media Relations

202-434-2560

**AARP: Congress' Inaction Threatens Older Americans' Access to Doctors**

House and Senate must act quickly to end uncertainty for patients and providers

WASHINGTON—AARP Executive Vice President Nancy LeaMond released this statement regarding the Sustainable Growth Rate formula:

"After years of band-aid patches and short-term fixes, doctors caring for the millions of seniors in Medicare are now reckoning with an unprecedented 21 percent cut to their reimbursement rates. This cut creates a dangerous atmosphere for seniors and their doctors, and will contribute to more doctors making the decision already made by some physicians to stop taking Medicare patients.

"Both the House and Senate have passed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) fixes to help provide temporary security for the millions of seniors in Medicare and the doctors who care for them. We urge Congress to work together to pass the longest extension possible, as soon as possible.

"Finding a physician is already a challenge for our members and older Americans. By allowing these cuts to take effect Congress has only made this challenge more difficult for millions of seniors already in Medicare and those entering the program for the first time.

"We remain committed to working with Congress to repeal the SGR and replace it with a permanent physician payment system that rewards quality and value and ends the uncertainty for patients and providers alike. But Congressional inaction must no longer get between someone in Medicare and their doctor."

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## AARP Thanks Senate for Taking Action on Medicare, Presses for Long-Term Solution Next Month

from: [Press Center](#) | November 18, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 18, 2010

### CONTACT

AARP Media Relations, [media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org), 202-434-2560

AARP Thanks Senate for Taking Action on Medicare, Presses for Long-Term Solution Next Month

WASHINGTON—AARP is pleased with today's bipartisan Senate vote to delay a scheduled 23 percent pay cut to doctors in Medicare, an important step toward a long-term solution that should ensure seniors continue to have access to their physicians through 2011 and beyond. A statement from AARP Senior Vice President David Sloane follows:

"Tonight, Senators came together to delay a potentially devastating pay cut to doctors in Medicare, ensuring seniors can continue to see their doctors during the holiday season. But their job is not done. Seniors have earned their Medicare, and they deserve the peace of mind of knowing their doctor will be there for them over the long-term.

"As Members of Congress go home for Thanksgiving, they'll be hearing from AARP members and seniors from across the political spectrum about the need to protect people's access to doctors in Medicare. Tonight's vote will help to extend the immediate deadline and give lawmakers time to adopt the year-long extension that seniors and doctors need.

"We strongly urge the House of Representatives to pass the short-term patch as soon as they return so that people in Medicare are not put in jeopardy next month. We look forward to working with Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle in December to find a long-term solution to ensure seniors' access to doctors in the future."

For more information, visit [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social welfare organization with a membership that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 35.1 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's millions of members and Americans 50+; AARP VIVA, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, [AARP.org](http://AARP.org). AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.



## With Deadline Looming, AARP Activists Press Congress to Protect Access to Medicare Doctors

from: [Press Center](#) | December 8, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 8, 2010

### CONTACT

AARP Media Relations, [media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org), 202-434-2560

With Deadline Looming, AARP Activists Press Congress to Protect Access to Medicare Doctors  
Group's members and activists contact Congress more than 100,000 times

WASHINGTON—Amid signs that the Senate will soon vote on a year-long solution to the looming pay cuts to Medicare doctors, AARP members and activists are urging their lawmakers to protect access for people in the program. Over the last three weeks, the Association's activists have called and e-mailed their members of Congress more than 100,000 times.

"AARP members are worried about being able to see their physicians, and they expect lawmakers to work across the aisle to find a solution," said AARP Executive Vice President Nancy LeaMond. "More than 80 percent of our members—whether Republican, Democrat or independent—are concerned that a Medicare pay cut will threaten access to their doctors. They're speaking out and they expect their members of Congress to listen."

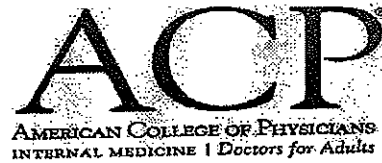
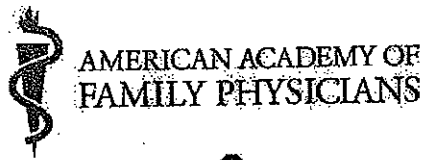
AARP organized more than a dozen teletown halls to help its members learn more about the physician payment problem, allowing more than 130,000 members to hear directly from AARP experts in their home states and in Washington. Paid radio and print advertising, phone calls, e-mails and direct mail from AARP have also encouraged the group's members, activists and the public to contact their legislators about this important issue.

LeaMond added: "We are encouraged by the reports of bipartisan progress on this critical issue. We look forward to a vote in the Senate today, and we encourage members of the House to quickly follow to ensure everyone in Medicare can see a doctor when they need one."

For more information, please visit [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).

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October 20, 2011

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman  
Senate Finance Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Orrin Hatch  
Ranking Member  
Senate Finance Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Fred Upton  
Chairman  
House Energy and Commerce  
Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman  
Ranking Member  
House Energy and Commerce  
Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dave Camp  
Chairman  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sander Levin  
Ranking Member  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Baucus, Ranking Member Hatch, Chairman Upton, Ranking Member Waxman, Chairman Camp, and Ranking Member Levin:

The undersigned organizations representing physicians and people with Medicare write to urge Congress to avert looming payment cuts to the physicians that millions of older adults and people with disabilities rely on for their care. Long overdue reform of the Medicare physician payment formula is needed to ensure stable access to health care for people with Medicare. We need to move away from the current payment formula that year after year relies on Congressional action to postpone scheduled payment cuts, including a drastic 29.5 percent cut scheduled to take effect beginning January 1, 2012.



The Honorable Chairman Baucus, Ranking Member Hatch, Chairman Upton, Ranking Member Waxman, Chairman Camp, and Ranking Member Levin  
October 20, 2011  
Page 2

Congress has long recognized that the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) is a poor method for establishing Medicare payment rates for doctors; in each of the last nine years it has voted to override the cuts mandated under the formula. New payment methods are needed that maintain access and encourage the delivery of high-quality care. Another temporary patch to avoid next year's cuts does not deliver the stability that people with Medicare need. Stop-gap measures have served to increase the size of future cuts, the cost of long-term reform, and the insecurity among people with Medicare about their ability to see the doctor of their choice.

Addressing the current flawed payment formula is a necessary and far-sighted course of action. As we address this problem, we must also ensure that we keep the Medicare program affordable for beneficiaries, especially given that today the average older person spends nearly 20 percent of his/her income on health care. We recommend that any savings from Medicare be returned to the Medicare program, and that all efforts be made to avoid imposing the costs of SGR reform on beneficiaries. We also urge a continued focus on physician services, including care coordination provided by primary care physicians, which are key to achieving the goals of better care, better health, and lower costs.

The annual legislative struggle to avert Medicare physician payment cuts has gone on far too long. It is crucial to ensure that people with Medicare can maintain relationships with the doctors who treat them. Our organizations are ready to work with you to help all members of Congress understand the importance of this issue to the older adults and people with disabilities in their home states.

Sincerely,

AARP  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American College of Physicians  
American Medical Association  
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.  
Medicare Rights Center



## **AARP, Others Call on Congress to Protect Access to Care for Millions of Older Americans**

### **Patient and Physician Groups Urge Congress to Fix Flawed Payment Formula for Physicians in Medicare**

from: [Press Center](#) | October 20, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 20, 2011

CONTACT:

Media Relations

202-434-2560

[media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org)

**AARP, Others Call on Congress to Protect Access to Care for Millions of Older Americans**  
*Patient and Physician Groups Urge Congress to Fix Flawed Payment Formula for Physicians in Medicare*

WASHINGTON – AARP, along with several other organizations representing patients and physicians, sent today a [letter](#) to Congress urging them to preserve access to care for millions of older adults and people with disabilities by addressing payment cuts to physicians in Medicare that are scheduled to begin in 2012. The text of the letter sent from AARP, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Physicians, the American Medical Association, the Center for Medicare Advocacy and the Medicare Rights Center follows:

“The undersigned organizations representing physicians and people with Medicare write to urge Congress to avert looming payment cuts to the physicians that millions of older adults and people with disabilities rely on for their care. Long overdue reform of the Medicare physician payment formula is needed to ensure stable access to health care for people with Medicare. We need to move away from the current payment formula that year after year relies on Congressional action to postpone scheduled payment cuts, including a drastic 29.5 percent cut scheduled to take effect beginning January 1, 2012.

“Congress has long recognized that the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) is a poor method for establishing Medicare payment rates for doctors; in each of the last nine years it has voted to override the cuts mandated under the formula. New payment methods are needed that maintain access and encourage the delivery of high-quality care. Another temporary patch to avoid next year’s cuts does not deliver the stability that people with Medicare need. Stop-gap measures have served to increase the size of future cuts, the cost of long-term reform, and the insecurity among people with Medicare about their ability to see the doctor of their choice.

“Addressing the current flawed payment formula is a necessary and far-sighted course of action. As we address this problem, we must also ensure that we keep the Medicare program affordable for beneficiaries, especially given that today the average older person spends nearly 20 percent of his/her income on health care. We recommend that any savings from Medicare be returned to the Medicare program, and that all efforts be made to avoid imposing the costs of SGR reform on beneficiaries. We also urge a continued focus on physician services, including care coordination provided by primary care physicians, which are key to achieving the goals of better care, better health, and lower costs.

"The annual legislative struggle to avert Medicare physician payment cuts has gone on far too long. It is crucial to ensure that people with Medicare can maintain relationships with the doctors who treat them. Our organizations are ready to work with you to help all members of Congress understand the importance of this issue to the older adults and people with disabilities in their home states."

For a copy of the letter please contact AARP Media Relations by phone (202-434-2560) or by email (media@aarp.org).

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## **AARP Calls on Congress to Keep Doctors in the Medicare Program**

### **Urges Congress to act by year end to prevent a large Medicare physician pay cut**

from: [Press Center](#) | December 20, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 20, 2011

**CONTACT:**

Media Relations

202-434-2560

[media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org)

**AARP Calls on Congress to Keep Doctors in the Medicare Program**

*Urges Congress to act by year end to prevent a large Medicare physician pay cut*

WASHINGTON – AARP Senior Vice President Joyce Rogers released the following statement following the House of Representatives' vote on the Medicare physician reimbursement package passed by the Senate:

"Today's vote calls into question whether millions of seniors in Medicare will continue to be able to get the care that they need. Unless Congress acts by the end of the year, physicians who treat Medicare beneficiaries will face a nearly 30 percent reduction in their Medicare reimbursements. And more physicians may choose to no longer take Medicare patients due to this dramatic cut to their payments.

"Our members have a clear message for Congress: don't cut our doctors' Medicare payments. For too many years, Congress has furthered the anxiety of people in Medicare with an annual ritual of gamesmanship with Medicare physician reimbursement rates. We once again must urge Congress to act to keep doctors in the Medicare program and give seniors the peace of mind they deserve."

For more information, please contact AARP Media Relations by phone (202-434-2560) or by email ([media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org)).

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## **AARP Applauds Passage of Medicare Physician Reimbursement Rates**

### **Measure will ensure access to doctors for millions of seniors in Medicare**

from: [Press Center](#) | February 17, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 17, 2012

**CONTACT:**

AARP Media Relations

202-434-2560

[media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org)

AARP Applauds Passage of Medicare Physician Reimbursement Rates

Measure will ensure access to doctors for millions of seniors in Medicare

WASHINGTON – AARP Executive Vice President Nancy LeaMond released the following statement following the Senate's vote on Medicare physician reimbursement rates included in the package passed by the House of Representatives:

"With today's passage of legislation to stabilize physician reimbursement, millions of seniors in Medicare will have the peace of mind in knowing that they will still have access to their doctors. We're pleased that Congress worked together to avoid devastating cuts to physicians' Medicare reimbursement through the end of this year.

"However, for too long, the so-called 'doc fix' has been an annual game of chicken on Capitol Hill. And with another temporary patch in place, both the size of future cuts and the cost of fixing the flawed physician payment system continue to increase.

"We will continue to work with Congress to address the flawed physician payment system and find a solution that gives seniors in Medicare and the physicians who care for them the stability they deserve."

For more information, please contact AARP Media Relations by phone (202-434-2560) or by email ([media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org)).

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