

**From:** Coffron, Matthew  
**To:** PF Dear Colleague  
**Subject:** Dear Colleague: HealthCare; Stop the Cuts and Reform Medicare's Payment System This Year  
**Date:** 3/30/2009 6:00:36 PM

## Stop the Cuts and Reform Medicare's Payment System This Year

From: The Honorable Shelley Berkley  
Sent By: matthew.coffron@mail.house.gov <mailto:matthew.coffron@mail.house.gov?subject=RE: Stop the Cuts and Reform Medicare's Payment System This Year>  
Date: 3/30/2009

## Preserve Americans' Access to the Care They Need

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in sending the attached letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Republican Leader John Boehner asking for their support in taking action this year to prevent cuts to reimbursements to physicians caring for seniors, provide a positive Medicare update for 2010, and to initiate payment reform to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries and all Americans continue to have access to physician services.

Medicare physician payments are scheduled to be cut 21.5 percent in 2010 and by more than 40 percent over the next decade. These cuts are required by the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula used to calculate Medicare physician reimbursement. In 2002, the SGR led to a 5.4 percent reduction in Medicare physician payments, and only Congressional action has prevented further reductions in the following years. Although we have prevented further cuts, the rate of reimbursement has not kept up with physician cost of practice.

Recently, some have proposed financing increased Medicare payments for some physicians and services by cutting payments to other physician specialties. With Medicare payments already not keeping pace with the rising practice costs, such proposals could potentially threaten patient access to the life-saving care provided by other physician specialties. While Congress must work together to help Americans better manage their care, Congress must also ensure that a new reimbursement structure not threaten patients' access to the life-saving care provided by other physicians.

Please join us in calling on Speaker Pelosi and Leader Boehner to take action this year to stop the 21.5 percent cut in 2010 and to initiate much-needed reform of Medicare's payment system that will not just

preserve but also improve Americans' access to the full-range of care provided by America's physicians.

To sign on, please contact Matt Coffron with Congresswoman Shelley Berkley at 5-5965 or Shauna McCarthy with Congressman Mark Kirk at 5-4835.

Sincerely,

Shelley Berkley Mark Kirk

Member of Congress Member of Congress

March XX, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi The Honorable John Boehner

Speaker Republican Leader

U.S. House of Representatives U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515 Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Boehner:

We write to express our concern about the Medicare physician payment system and the effect that future Medicare payment cuts would have on Americans' ability to obtain important medical care. We ask for your support and leadership in enacting legislation this year that would provide a positive Medicare update for all physicians in 2010 and would initiate payment reform to ensure that Medicare

beneficiaries and all Americans will be able to access the care they depend on their physicians to provide.

Unless Congress acts, Medicare physician payments will be cut 21.5 percent next year and by more than 40 percent over the next decade. These cuts are required by the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula used to calculate Medicare physician reimbursement. In 2002, the SGR led to a 5.4 percent reduction in Medicare physician payments, and only Congressional action has prevented further reductions. Even though Congress stopped these cuts, Medicare payments have not kept pace with rising costs of medical practice, and the uncertainty surrounding Medicare reimbursement from one year to the next threatens patients' access to care by undermining the ability of physicians to plan for the future. ;nbs! p;

Many ideas have been offered about how to reform Medicare's physician payment system, including resetting the SGR baseline, removing physician-administered drugs from the calculation of the SGR, basing payments on a measure of practice costs, and building on physician-led quality improvement efforts. One idea we cannot support is a proposal to finance increased reimbursement for one physician specialty or one set of physician services by simply cutting reimbursement for all others. While we must find ways to help Americans better manage their care, we do not support proposals that would establish a reimbursement structure that would threaten patients' access to the life-saving care that other physician specialties are trained to provide.

It is clear that the Medicare payment system is broken and Congress must act this year. With your leadership, we believe Congress can come together to avert next year's cut and initiate reforms that not only preserve, but also improve Americans' access to the care that only a qualified physician can provide.

Sincerely,