



ARKANSAS MEDICAL SOCIETY

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To Members of the United States Congress:

Thank you for all your efforts to make health care more accessible to Arkansans. We want to share with you what the Arkansas Medical Society believes are the most important issues that cannot be left on the cutting room floor as the process moves through Congress. The attached document outlines in a brief format what we support, what we oppose, and our thoughts on the public option. As the August recess approaches, we look forward to seeing you back home where we can discuss these with you in person.

One of these priorities is of paramount importance to the physicians and patients of Arkansas. We are excited to hear of efforts to repeal the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate formula for Medicare. Avoiding the proposed 21% reimbursement cut for 2010 is a good start but we are terribly concerned that it may be too little too late. Every day, we here from patients who cannot find a physician taking “new” Medicare patients, even in places like Little Rock where you would not expect access problems. It has become a major obstacle in recruiting new physicians because it is common knowledge that Arkansas’ Medicare reimbursement is “the” lowest in America. One solution is to eliminate the geographic disparity that exists in Medicare reimbursement. Social Security benefits offer a great analogy. Regardless of whether you live in Star City or New York City, your Social Security check is the same. Eliminating this geographic disparity would be a major step in bringing needed physicians to all areas of Arkansas.

As an organization representing over 4000 Arkansas physicians and medical students, we must share our concerns about HR 3200. Since HR 3200 was introduced last week, we have heard from many of these physicians who in turn are hearing from their patients. Support is strong for many of the provisions in HR 3200, but there is also overwhelming opposition to other parts of the bill. We know that there are many steps ahead before a final bill is produced and we want to work closely with you and your office to address these concerns while offering our support for those provisions that are helpful to our patients.

And finally, we want to thank you for recognizing the importance of slowing this thing down in order to get it right. Also, please know that we are available and anxious to help you in any way. It’s good to know that our nation and our fellow Arkansans can count on you.

Sincerely,

Steven Strode, MD, President
Arkansas Medical Society

Stephen Magie, MD, Chair
Arkansas Medical Society Board of Trustees