



**A Coalition of 13 Medical Societies Representing  
170,000 Specialty Physicians in the United States**

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**ONE-THIRD OF SENATE AND HOUSE LAWMAKERS WARN CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS THAT  
FEE CUTS COULD FURTHER DESTABILIZE MEDICARE SYSTEM**

*Alliance of Specialty Medicine Urges Congress to Prevent 2004 Medicare Reimbursement Cuts*

(Washington, DC) – A decisive bloc of lawmakers—36 senators and 157 House members—have asked House and Senate leaders to take up independent legislation to prevent a cut in Medicare physician reimbursement if the Medicare reform deliberations are not concluded by the end of the year. The “Dear Colleague” letters, authored by Sens. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., and Jeff Bingaman, D-NM, and Reps. Mark Foley, R-Fla., and Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, also ask leaders to address some of the underlying problems with the payment formula.

“The prospect of continued payment reductions under the Medicare physician update formula is threatening to destabilize the program by forcing an increasing number of physicians to reconsider their willingness to treat Medicare patients,” the letters state. “We must address this problem before it becomes even more volatile and costly to correct.”

The Alliance of Specialty Medicine, which worked to obtain signatories for the letters, has renewed its call to Congress to prevent the cuts and to address the long-term problems with the Medicare physician payment system. If Congress does not act, physicians are scheduled to receive at least a 4.2 percent reduction in Medicare fees on Jan. 1.

“The Alliance is grateful that one-third of the Congress has demanded that the Medicare physician reimbursement issue be addressed before Congress heads home for the year,” said Raymond L. Cornelison, Jr., MD, president of the American Academy of Dermatology Association. “Even though a successful effort by Congress and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to correct past accounting errors prevented a cut in 2003 fees, the underlying problems with the Medicare payment system are still wreaking havoc on physicians and forcing them to ask Congress for relief year after year. Congress must address the flaws with the formula and make changes that will stabilize the system into the future.

“Further cuts in Medicare reimbursement simply will take an already untenable situation and make it worse,” Dr. Cornelison continued. “It will undoubtedly impair our ability to care for Medicare patients. One-third of Congress has said it’s time to act, and it must before irreparable harm is done.”

*The Alliance of Specialty Medicine is composed of 13 national medical societies representing more than 170,000 specialty-care physicians. The Alliance’s mission is to improve access to quality medical care for all Americans through the promotion of sound federal policy.*

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