

Lake Placid Journal: Mahoney Stands up For Seniors' Access to Doctors

July 17, 2008

Following the President's Veto of The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (H.R. 6331) this afternoon, Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16) joined his colleagues and voted to override President Bush's veto. A veto-proof, bipartisan majority in the Senate and the House passed legislation that will strengthen Medicare, prevent a 10.6% pay-cut to doctors and ensure beneficiaries have access to the doctor they know and trust, especially Americans living in rural areas and seniors.

"The President's veto would have denied millions of seniors and people with disabilities access to critical Medicare services. It would cut physician's pay thereby pushing more doctors out of the Medicare program," said Congressman Mahoney. "While today's legislation is not a permanent solution, it keeps Medicare afloat until we have new leadership in the White House that will make sure everyone who works and pays taxes in America will have access to affordable healthcare."

"All of us here at OxyPros are very pleased that Congressman Mahoney helped override the president's veto of HR 6331. By doing so, he helped affirm his commitment to provide Medicare beneficiaries with quality and affordable home medical equipment needs on the Treasure Coast. We also applaud his willingness to learn about the home medical equipment business before his vote and we look forward to working again with Congressman Mahoney when a new Medicare initiative is introduced," said Jim Westcott, owner of OxyPros, Inc., a home medical equipment supplier in Stuart, FL.

This legislation would:

- Prevent the 10.6% reduction in physician reimbursement payments that was scheduled to take place on July 1, 2008;

- Amend the Social Security Act to extend expiring provisions under the Medicare Program, to improve beneficiary access to preventive and mental health services, to enhance low-income benefit programs, and to maintain access to care in rural areas, including pharmacy access;

- Ensure that active-duty military personnel and military retirees will continue to have access to the doctors they know and trust. The Tricare program (the military health care program) uses the Medicare fee schedule to pay doctors. Therefore, when Medicare cuts physicians payments, Tricare physician payments are cut as well - threatening the access of Tricare participants to their doctors;

- Eliminate cuts to oxygen and wheelchair services and the postponement of the competitive bidding program for durable medical equipment (DME); and

- Provides a payment freeze for 2008 and a 1.1% update for 2009.

The legislation follows PAYGO's restrictions, which require that expenditures are offset by cuts or savings in other areas, by reducing some bonus payments to private Medicare Advantage plans. On June 24, 2008, it passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 355 - 59 and on July 9, 2008, passed the Senate.