

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

LEGISLATION: Want A Pay Boost? Call Your Congress Member Now

Don't wait until year's end to push for pay hike

Good news: With a 10-percent Medicare cut slated for January, Congress isn't waiting until the last moment to work on rescuing your payments.

The Children's Health And Medicare Preservation (CHAMP) Act would eliminate next year's cut as well as the 5-percent cut for 2009. Instead, you'd have a modest 0.5-percent increase for both years.

Because next year is a presidential election year, Congress probably won't be able to pass much major legislation. So it's important to secure your reimbursement for 2009 as well as 2008--now, experts note.

Support the House bill: The House of Representatives aims to pass the CHAMP Act before Congress leaves for its August recess. But the Senate is considering a bill that would only expand health coverage for children, without addressing Medicare payments. Now's the time to contact your Senators and urge their support for the House approach.

At press time, leading Democrats were delaying the CHAMP Act vote. It remains to be seen whether the House will manage to pass the bill before the recess. Leading Republicans also announced they'd introduce their own competing bill, which ignores physician payments. And **President Bush** has threatened to veto the CHAMP Act, mostly because of its managed care cuts and expansions of children's health coverage.

Popular proposals: Many of the Medicare proposals in the bill currently on the table are designed to win more votes, says **Amy Demske**, an attorney with **Arent Fox** in Washington. -At some point there's going to be so many things in the bill it'll be hard for many members to vote against,- she adds.

The **American Medical Association** and the **American Association for Retired Persons** are spending at least \$1.3 million on television ads to support the CHAMP Act.

This bill would most likely gather the 60 votes it would need to survive a filibuster in the Senate, predicts **Julius Hobson**, an attorney with **Powell Goldstein Frazer & Murphy** in Washington. The tricky part, he says, may be mustering the 67 Senators and 290 House members to override a Bush veto.

Editor's Note: For more information on this pending legislation, turn to pages 179 and 181.