

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### Part B Funding: Dems' Stimulus Bill Earmarks Over \$26 Billion for Healthcare

#### **\$550 billion bill doesn't ignore medical practices.**

President Barack Obama was just sworn into office, but Congress already has a bill waiting for his review that will affect almost all American healthcare practices.

The bill, known as the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill of 2009," proposes \$550 billion in investments that will fund every-thing from clean energy to education. But the big news for medical practices across the country is that \$26.6 billion will go toward healthcare initiatives.

The bill, which now heads to House committees, then to the Senate, proposes channeling \$20 billion into health information technology "to jumpstart efforts to computerize health records to cut costs and reduce medical errors," according to a Jan. 15 summary of the bill by Congressman **Dave Obey (D-WI)**, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

Although the government hasn't specified where that \$20 billion would go, analysts are hopeful that it will aid them in their quest to move from paper records to electronic records systems.

"It's possible that the stimulus money could be there to help practices convert from paper records to digital records," says **Heather Corcoran** with CGH Billing. "Many practices and clinics have complained about the high costs to make this conversion."

Another \$3 billion from the stimulus package would go toward a prevention and wellness fund, aimed at fighting preventable chronic diseases, Obey's press release notes.

**Plus:** \$600 million more would go toward training primary care providers to address shortages among those ranks in medical schools across the country.

**Research:** The package would pin another \$1.1 billion toward researching the effectiveness of different medical treatments funded by Medicare and Medicaid to determine which work best.

To read Obey's full summary of the package, visit <http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/PressSummary01-15-09.pdf>.