

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PART B PAYMENT: Congress Officially Delays Physician Pay Cuts Until 2010

Lawmakers overturn presidential veto just in time

If you were starting to break a sweat in preparation for the 10.6 percent cut to your Medicare reimbursement, it's time to relax.

With not a moment to spare, the House and Senate joined forces on July 15 to overturn **President Bush's** veto of the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (H.R. 6331).

The new law is retroactive to July 1--which means that if your carrier paid any of your claims with dates of service after June 30 at lower rates, they're going to owe you money.

Carriers will -automatically reprocess any claims paid at the lower rates,- according to a July 16 CMS memo.

The legislation will ensure that instead of taking a major cut to your fees, you'll continue to enjoy the 0.5 percent boost that you received last January. You'll also benefit from an increase to the 2009 conversion factor of an additional 1.1 percent.

Congress- action also brings additional positive changes such as staving off the competitive bidding program for 18 months.

Temporary cut: Keep in mind that the 18-month Medicare payment fix is not a permanent solution to Medicare's payment woes. As in past years, the Congressional decision sets physicians up for potential future cuts once 2009 rolls around.

Many analysts are crossing their fingers in hopes that the decision to overturn the president's veto will be a positive sign that a long-term solution is imminent.

-I hope this is just the first vote of many to come, which will reverse the destructive and costly privatization of Medicare, begin a serious bi-partisan debate about nationwide healthcare reform and strengthen the Medicare program for future generations,- said **Barbara B. Kennelly**, president of the **National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare**, in a July 15 statement.

Action: -What people may want to do is write their Congressmen to request a long-term solution so we don't have to do last minute fixes again,- suggests **Barbara J. Cobuzzi, MBA, CPC-OTO, CPC-H, CPC-P, CPC-I, CHCC**, president of **CRN Healthcare Solutions**, in Tinton Falls, N.J.