

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### **PART B PAYMENT: House, Senate Want to Make Sure You Don't Face Pay Cuts**

#### **As the vote nears the floor, physicians are cautiously optimistic**

If you've been wishing on a four-leaf clover for legislators to fix payment problems, your good luck may be working.

Last week, both the House of Representatives and Senate voted to approve budget resolutions that would shoot down President Bush's proposed Medicare cuts. But the resolutions are not law--they are simply guidelines for legislators to follow while writing legislation, and those in the healthcare community hope that the House and Senate take notes off of the measure when creating new healthcare regulations.

Meanwhile, Sen. **Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.)** created a proposal called the Save Medicare Act of 2008, which proposes a delay in the sustainable growth rate cuts that loom. In addition to staving off the 10.6 percent cut that's due this July, Stabenow's measure would boost rates another 1.8 percent next year.

Healthcare associations were thrilled to have the support of Stabenow, who is a member of the **Senate Finance Committee**. -New legislation introduced by Senator Stabenow is the critical ingredient needed to save seniors- access to care as it stops this year's harsh Medicare payment cut to physicians,- said **Nancy Nielsen, MD**, president-elect of the **American Medical Association**, in a statement. -In three short months Medicare will cut physician payments by 10.6 percent. This cut will be a disaster for Medicare patients as 60 percent of physicians say it will force them to limit the number of new Medicare patients they can treat.-

In addition, Sen. **John Cornyn (R-Texas)** wrote an op-ed piece in the Houston Chronicle noting that he introduced legislation in the Senate called the Ensuring the Future Physician Workforce Act of 2008 to stop -the rate-cut charade- and eliminate the reimbursement cap. -The effect on spending is the same, but physicians are given fair reimbursements and more peace of mind,- he wrote. -As a result, patients would also benefit from -more certainty concerning the health care services they depend on.-

Although not guaranteed, lawmakers could vote on a payment fix within the next few weeks. Keep your eye on the Insider for updates.