

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### **PART B PAYMENT: Senate Votes to Avert Medicare Pay Cut for 18 Months**

#### **Power is in President Bush's hands as he considers whether to sign the bill into law**

You're getting closer to a short-term solution to your Medicare payment woes.

On July 9, the Senate voted to support the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (H.R. 6331). Although the Senate had previously shot down the measure during a June 26 vote, its members changed that by voting in favor of the bill this time around.

Now the bill moves to the Oval office for the president's signature. Although **President Bush** has vowed to veto the measure, both the House and Senate passed the bill by a veto-proof margin, which means that if necessary, legislators could re-vote to override a veto.

In addition to halting the July 1 rate cut, the legislation would continue the 0.5 percent boost that you received last January and would increase the conversion factor an additional 1.1 percent for 2009.

**Physician groups approve:** Following the positive vote, advocacy groups cheered the news.

-We, along with seniors, the disabled, and military families, call on President Bush to sign this bill into law to protect access to health care for so many deserving Americans,- said **J. James Rohack, MD**, president-elect of the **American Medical Association** in a July 9 statement.

**Temporary fix irks some:** Not everyone expressed delight at the news of the new temporary pay fix, however.

-Congress should be embarrassed to have doctors and seniors come to Washington hat-in-hand every six months or 12 months or 18 months,- said Sen. **John Cornyn (R-Tex.)** in a statement following the vote. Despite supporting the measure, Cornyn noted that physicians need a long-term solution to the growing problem of pay cuts to the Medicare program.

President Bush has 10 days to make a decision on the bill. Until that time, the pay cut is still in effect, although CMS may choose to extend the 10-day hold on claims that it imposed on June 30.

To read all aspects of H.R. 6331, including how it affects therapists, primary care physicians and imaging centers, see Vol. 9, No. 24 of the Insider.