

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PHYSICIAN NOTES: Congress Pulls Conversion Factor Freeze From Jobs Bill, Leaving 21 Percent Cut Scheduled for March 1

Plus: CMS assigns 'CLIA-waived' status to five additional lab tests, including a Rapid Strep A test.

Last week, we told you the good news that Congress had proposed extending your temporary conversion factor freeze through this fall, thanks to a Medicare provision that lawmakers had added to a new jobs bill. But with just over a week to go before your Medicare payments drop by 21.29 percent, **Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid** removed the Medicare pay freeze extension from the bill, citing concerns over the provision's expense.

What this means: Unless lawmakers intervene using a different method, your 2010 conversion factor will drop by 21.29 percent on March 1. The cuts were supposed to go into effect on Jan. 1, but Congressional intervention froze the rates at \$36.0846 for dates of service between Jan. 1, 2010 and Feb. 28, 2010.

Keep an eye on the Insider to learn whether the pay cut will take effect in March.