



## AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

1090 VERMONT AVE., NW, SUITE 510 • WASHINGTON, DC 20005 • (202) 414-0140 (800) 962-9008 • FAX: (202) 544-3525

*D.O.s: Physicians Treating People, Not Just Symptoms*

November 14, 2003

The Honorable Dennis Hastert  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Speaker:

As President of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) I am pleased to inform you of our support for the “Medicare Modernization and Prescription Drug Act” (H.R. 1/S. 1) conference report. The AOA, which represents the nation’s 52,000 osteopathic physicians, applauds the conference committee and thanks them for their efforts to improve the health care of Medicare beneficiaries.

Congress is uniquely positioned to both reform the Medicare program and enhance the benefits available to beneficiaries. This opportunity should not be missed.

Medicare has served our nation’s seniors and disabled for over 38 years. However, it must be reformed to meet the needs of beneficiaries. It must become more flexible and capable of implementing new treatments, services, and technologies. Finally, Medicare must include access to widely accepted treatments, including coverage for pharmaceutical treatments.

As part of this reformation Medicare should ensure that physicians are able to continue participating in the program, providing care to the millions of beneficiaries who depend upon them. The reformation should recognize the challenges facing urban and rural communities, removing administrative burdens that hinder access to care and the recruitment and retention of physicians. These reforms should not be pursued or implemented independent of fiscal responsibility. Congress must improve and enhance the program while shoring up the long-term fiscal solvency of the program.

The Medicare conference report, as we understand it, addresses the major objectives of the AOA:

- Reforms the physician payment update, replacing projected reductions for 2004 and 2005 with positive updates.

- Improves the physician payment formula by eliminating volatile economic factors.
- Improves health care in rural America by creating an equitable funding system for physicians and by establishing incentive add-ons for those physicians who practice in areas without adequate access to physician services, assisting rural communities in the recruitment and retention of physicians.
- Reduces the regulatory burden imposed upon physicians by the Medicare program freeing up time for physicians to care for patients—not completing paperwork.

The AOA looks forward to working with you in the coming days to secure support for this historic legislation. Together we can improve the quality and availability of health care for millions of Medicare beneficiaries, secure continued physician participation in the Medicare program, improve access to care in rural communities, and protect the long-term solvency of the program. These are admirable accomplishments.

The AOA and our members stand ready to assist you in this great endeavor. This is a priority for our members and we will be utilizing all available resources to secure approval of this bill. Please contact the AOA's Department of Government Relations at (202) 414-0147 for additional information.

Sincerely,



Darryl A. Beehler, D.O.  
President

C: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
The Honorable Roy Blunt  
The Honorable Deborah Pryce  
The Honorable Steny Hoyer