

DELIVERED VIA FACSIMILE

November 20, 2003

The Honorable William Thomas

United States House of Representatives
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FEDERAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Dear Representative Thomas

On behalf of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, I am writing in support of the Medicare Prescription Drug Bill, which contains many needed changes to the Medicare program. The resolution on a number of key issues that the Academy and other physicians groups have fought for will work to preserve immediate access to medical services for beneficiaries. In addition to a two year SGR fix that derails immediate Medicare payment cuts scheduled for 2004 and 2005, the inclusion of regulatory relief provisions to reduce the unnecessary burdens associated with the Medicare program is very good news.

As with any such complex legislation, refinements may be needed over the next few years as implementation moves forward. We believe, however, that Congress must not delay in passing this monumental bill before adjourning for the year.

The Academy is the world's largest organization of eye physicians and surgeons, with more than 27,500 members. Over 16,000 of our members are in active practice in the United States.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,



William Rich, III, M.D.
Secretary for Federal Affairs

Cc: Cathy Grealy Cohen
AAO Washington office