

111 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-1488
703 684 2782
703 684 7343 fax
www.apta.org

November 19, 2003

The Honorable Bill Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Officers

Ben F. Massey, Jr., PT, MA
President

Jane R. Beznor, PT, PhD
Vice President

Randy Roesch, PT, MBA
Secretary

Francis J. Welk, PT, MEd
Treasurer

Stephen M. Levine, PT, MSHA
Speaker of the House

R. M. Barney Poole, PT, MEd
Vice Speaker

Directors

Jeanell A. Bohmert, PT, MS

James M. Dunleavy, PT, MS

Pauline W. Hesch, PT, MPS

Karl R. Gibson, PT, MS

Connie Hauser, PT

James C. Milder, PT

Jane M. Peterson, PT, MA

John Wallace, PT, MS, OCS

R. Scott Ward, PT, PhD

Chief Executive Officer

Francis J. Mallon, Esq.

Dear Majority Leader Frist and Speaker Hastert:

On behalf of its 64,000 members, the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) sincerely appreciates your tireless efforts to pass important Medicare legislation to meet the needs of older and disabled Americans. Based on our understanding of the provisions included in the conference agreement on the Medicare Prescription Drug and Improvement Act, APTA supports the agreement the conference committee is about to adopt and is actively encouraging its members to urge their members of Congress to support its passage.

We are particularly pleased that the conference agreement addresses critical issues that affect the ability of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants to provide crucial rehabilitation services to Medicare beneficiaries. Chief among these issues is the onerous financial cap on Medicare therapy benefits, which is currently limiting beneficiary access to necessary rehabilitation care. We continue to urge Congress to completely repeal the therapy cap, but recognizing the budgetary limitations of the current legislation we deeply appreciate your efforts to reimpose a one-year moratorium preventing the enforcement of the therapy cap in calendar year 2004. We pledge to continue to work with you to replace this arbitrary limitation on therapy care.

We also applaud your efforts to preserve adequate Medicare payment for physical therapy services under the Part B fee schedule. As you know, physical therapists and other providers face a 4.5 percent cut in payment next year unless Congress intervenes. We understand that conferees have included language in the agreement to provide 1.5 percent increases in payments for 2004 and 2005.

APTA is also appreciative of efforts of members in both chambers to improve patient access to physical therapy services by including language based on the Medicare Patient Access to Physical Therapists Act (H.R. 792/S. 493). The Senate voted to authorize a budget-neutral demonstration project to provide Medicare beneficiaries with direct access to physical therapists in accordance with their state law, while the House included a provision to study the impact on the Medicare program of providing direct access to physical therapists services. As conferees complete the final agreement, we hope you will be able to include the Senate demonstration project provision as an important step toward reducing obstacles to needed rehabilitation services for Medicare beneficiaries.

CSM 2004:
Combined Sections Meeting

February 4-8
Nashville, Tennessee

PT 2004:
The Annual Conference
& Exposition of the
American Physical Therapy
Association

June 30-July 3
Chicago, Illinois

It is our understanding that the conference agreement on the Medicare Prescription Drug and Improvement Act also addresses several other issues that APTA has strongly supported. Physical therapists and other providers in rural areas have suffered for years from disparities in the Medicare program that denied adequate and equitable payment for their services, and we strongly support the efforts of Senators and Representatives to correct these problems and improve payment and access to health care services for Medicare beneficiaries in rural and underserved areas.

Finally, APTA has advocated legislation to reform Medicare's arcane regulatory processes and improve the responsiveness and performance of its contractors, so we are very pleased that the conference committee has included provisions that will address these problems and reform Medicare's regulatory and contracting systems.

In summary, we wish it had been possible to accomplish more in this bill to improve the Medicare program and improve access to physical therapy services. However, we applaud you and the members of the conference committee for accomplishing so much within the restrictions that this legislation faced. Based on our understanding of the provisions of the final agreement, APTA is pleased to support the Medicare Prescription Drug and Improvement Act and to urge its immediate passage. APTA will convey its support of the bill to its 64,000 members, including the 15,000 members of its grassroots network, and call on them to contact their members of Congress and urge them to vote in favor of the conference agreement.

Again, on behalf of APTA's members I thank you for your unceasing efforts to improve the Medicare program and the availability of physical therapy and other health care services to the nation's older and disabled citizens.

Sincerely,



Ben F. Massey, Jr., PT, MA
President

cc: The Honorable Charles Grassley
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate

The Honorable William Thomas
Chairman
Committee on Ways & Means
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable W.J. "Billy" Tauzin
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives