

Healthcare Leadership Council

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Health Leaders Hail Congressional Agreement on Medicare Reform; Urge Senate, House to Pass Legislation

WASHINGTON – Leading health care companies and institutions praised U.S. Senate and House negotiators today for reaching agreement on Medicare reform legislation, and urged lawmakers to finish work on the issue over the next few days.

“This is a tremendous victory for millions of senior citizens,” said Mary R. Grealy, president of the Healthcare Leadership Council, a coalition of chief executives from the nation’s premier hospitals, health plans, medical device manufacturers, pharmaceutical companies and other health care institutions. “The long wait for a prescription drug benefit is almost over.”

Ms. Grealy said the legislation is a major step forward in giving seniors access to 21st century medicine. She said President Bush deserves considerable credit for proposing Medicare reform and for strongly advocating congressional action on the issue.

“For too long, Medicare has practiced a mode of health care that was suitable for 1965, when it was created, but not for today,” Ms. Grealy said. “Today, we have the medicines and health technologies to keep seniors leading healthy, active lives. Medicare should be in the practice of maintaining the good health of its beneficiaries, instead of simply paying bills.”

She said, from her organization’s perspective, the compromise agreement will likely not be perfect, but that lawmakers and advocacy groups should not let quibbles over details block necessary progress.

“It’s important to remember that this bill, once passed, does not close the book on Medicare reform,” she said. “There will be ample opportunities for future congresses to modify and improve this legislation. It’s critical, though, that we take the vital first step of getting a prescription drug benefit on the books. It is essential, as well, to provide much-needed fiscal relief for hospitals, physicians and health plans serving Medicare beneficiaries. Congress can’t come this close and then leave seniors empty-handed.”

Ms. Grealy said her organization would be conducting extensive grassroots activities to urge members of the Senate and House to pass the Medicare compromise next week.

“We’ll be vocal in states and congressional districts throughout the country, getting the word out that it’s time to keep the promise of prescription drugs and better health care to America’s seniors,” she said.



*To contact Mary Grealy this weekend for an interview on the Medicare compromise,
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