

MPA Appreciates Congressional Votes to Pass Medicare Improvement Act & Override Veto Bill Includes Key Pharmacy Provisions (July 2008)

Members of the Montana Pharmacy Association (MPA) and pharmacy professionals across the country thank members of Congress for voting in support of the **Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (H.R. 6331)**. The bill even survived a Presidential veto when both Houses of Congress submitted the necessary votes to override the veto. As a result the bill is now law.

All three members of the Montana Congressional Delegation, U.S. Senator Max Baucus, U.S. Senator Jon Tester and Congressman Denny Rehberg consistently supported the bill and MPA has contacted each representative to express our sincere thanks. In particular we acknowledged U.S. Senator Max Baucus for his leadership in pushing the bill forward as Chairman of the powerful U.S. Senate Finance Committee and for his unwavering support in helping secure passage of this legislation.

H.R. 6331 is a highly important federal policy initiative that will work to delay physician payment cuts in the Medicare program and includes many critical pharmacy provisions that ensures better patient access to pharmacist services.

MPA and other national pharmacy associations pushed hard for the passage of H.R. 6331 because the bill included key provisions to improve patient access such as:

- Delays implementation of Medicaid's Average Manufacturers Price (AMP) reimbursement formula until October 1, 2009;
- Requires prompt payment of Medicare Part D claims. Provision goes into effect 1/1/2010.
- Delays implementation of Round 1 of Medicare's durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies (DMEPOS) competitive bidding program. CMS clarifies the Sept. 30, 2009 deadline previously established for all DMEPOS suppliers to be accredited is still in effect.
- Requires weekly updating of Medicare prescription drug pricing.

MPA wants to commend Tobey Schule for his hard work as Chair of our Legislative/Policy Committee on this legislation and we thank the many members who sent e-mails and letters to urge passage of H.R. 6331.

**Letter from
Tobey T. Schule (Sykes Pharmacy)
Chair, MPA Legislative / Policy Committee**

Dear Pharmacists,

Senator Baucus has been a champion for our profession, the seniors of Montana and for the seniors and pharmacies across our Nation. We all owe him our deepest gratitude and our support.

I have had the privilege of working with Senator Baucus since 2001. It all started in Kalispell when he was looking for ideas and comments about what later became the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003. This was the start of the Medicare Part D.

In January, 2006, I was asked by Senator Baucus and his staff to testify before the U.S. Senate Finance Committee. Senator Baucus was completely aware of the problems that faced our seniors and pharmacies as the result of the start of Medicare Part D. At that time he was looking for solutions to the problems. He and his staff had worked diligently on the problems that faced seniors and the practice of pharmacy. He pushed to stop the co-branding on insurance cards, got the insurance companies to pay what was owed to pharmacies, and got the confusion of the insurance plans changed for seniors.

In May, 2007, Senator Baucus was still seeking ways to protect pharmacy and our seniors. I was asked again to testify before the Finance Committee. Since that time, Senator Baucus has fought for and successfully protected pharmacy. Due to Senator Baucus's hard work and due diligence, we now have passage of prompt pay, a delay in AMP, and a delay on the competitive bidding of DME.

Senator Baucus stood solid on these issues and fought for the legislation that was needed to correct these problems. Baucus has stood up for pharmacists and now we need to stand up for him. Senator Baucus will always be welcome at my table.

Tobey T. Schule
Sykes Pharmacy